
SPECIAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19th December, 2023

Present: Councillor Josh Allen (in the Chair),
Councillors Dominik Allen, Mike Booth, Melissa Fisher,
Carole Haythornthwaite and Colin McKenzie
Co-optees: Shahed Mahmood

In Attendance: Councillors Zak Khan

Apologies Councillor Noordad Aziz

251 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

There were apologies from Councillor Noordad Aziz. Councillor Colin McKenzie substituted.

252 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations.

253 Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 9th November 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Resolved - **the minutes of the Special Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9th November 2023 be received and signed as a correct record.**

254 Chair's Update

The Chair provided a verbal update.

At the November meeting, this committee made 2 recommendations to Cabinet relating to the Market Hall decant.

The recommendations were as follows:

- (i) That Cabinet arrange a date for all councillors who wish to meet with traders and businesses around the Town Square to listen to their views; and
- (ii) That Cabinet consider the reopening of the Peel Street public conveniences during the temporary closure of the Market Hall.

It is a requirement to report back the responses from Cabinet to the relevant Scrutiny Meeting. The Leader of the Council responded to both recommendations at Cabinet on 6th December. The first recommendation was rejected, with the Leader emphasising the extensive amount of consultation which has and continues to take place with regarding the Levelling Up project and Market Hall decant. The 2nd recommendation was accepted and this is now being looked into.

In addition, the Committee also recommended that Planning Officers be requested to report back to the Committee on some outstanding questions. The Planning Officer has submitted responses to all these questions in writing which have been submitted to Committee members.

There were no questions from the Committee. The update was noted.

255 Economic Development Update

The Chair welcomed Cllr Zak Khan (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Sustainability), Mark Hoyle (Head of Regeneration and Housing) and Salma Choudhry (Economic Development Manager) to present this item.

Mark Hoyle began the report by welcoming Salma Choudhry to his team, who has recently been appointed as the Economic Development Manager and has been doing excellent working engaging with local businesses.

Cllr Khan reported that he has already begun to work closely with Salma, and would like to record his thanks for the work already carried out in a short space of time. Cllr Khan referred to the written report which was just a snippet of activity being carried out by the Council. He referred to recent news that the Council had received some Levelling Up funding for Great Harwood and insisted that economic development is about the whole borough, not just Accrington.

Cllr Khan highlighted the following from the report:

- Levelling Up Funding
- Additional £20 million funding
- Role of the Economic Development Manager
- Work with the Federation of Small Businesses
- Economic Policy Forum
- Mini Business themed workshops
- Boost Business
- Commercial planning applications
- Retailers against crime
- Accrington town centre projects
- UKSPF
- Meetings with business leaders
- Community outreach
- Lancashire Business Day
- Newsletter
- Employment and skills meeting

The Chair welcomed the report and invited questions from the Committee. The Portfolio Holder and Officer responded to questions on the following:

- Potential continuation of UKSPF
- Devolution and the effects on future funding
- Small Business Champion role
- Supporting businesses outside of Accrington
- Communication with small businesses
- Feedback from small businesses
- Encouraging good quality start-up businesses
- Engagement with local colleges
- What is the long term vision

Cllr Khan ended by saying he is open to engagement with all Councillors on this topic at any time, and he would welcome input.

The report was noted.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed