

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the proceedings at a virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 22 June 2020, at 10.30 a.m.

Present

Councillors

Vicky Hughes (Chairman)
Helen Chaffey (Vice-Chairman)

Pat Bell
Brian Cooper
Eamonn Hennessy

Hazel Hodgson
Janette Jenkinson
Susanne Long

Doug Rathbone
Mark Wilson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anne Hutton.

Officers

Linda Fisher	Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer)
Rachel Ireland	Case Management Officer
Hannah Girvan	Strategy Specialist (Sustainability)
Dan Hudson	Strategy Lead Specialist
Claire Read	Finance Specialist
Helen Smith	Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer)
David Sykes	Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources
Julie Jackson	Principal Specialist People
Lawrence Conway	Chief Executive
Simon Rowley	Director of Customer and Commercial Services

Also in attendance were Councillors Giles Archibald (Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder), Jonathan Brook (Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder), Andrew Jarvis (Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder) and Dyan Jones (Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder).

O&S/1

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Following confirmation that the live stream of the meeting had commenced, the Chairman welcomed everyone to the first virtual meeting of South Lakeland District Council's Overview and Scrutiny, in doing so, thanking all officers involved in the process for their work on the project.

The Chairman referred to the new Government legislation allowing councils to conduct remote meetings and explained in detail to all taking part, and for the benefit of members of the public, the procedures for the meeting. She then invited Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to introduce themselves, to advise whether they were taking part by video or audio and to confirm that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in the meeting. All Members present, including the Chairman herself, indicated that this was the case. The Chairman then referred to Members of the Council's Cabinet who were also present at the meeting, to participate and answer

questions, although without voting rights. The Chairman invited Cabinet Members to introduce themselves and to advise whether they were taking part by video or audio and to confirm that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in the meeting. The Chairman then referred to officers present at the meeting who would introduce themselves when asked to address the meeting.

O&S/2 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Anne Hutton.

O&S/3 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 April 2019.

O&S/4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED - That it be noted that no declarations of interest were raised.

O&S/5 DECLARATION OF THE PARTY WHIP

RESOLVED - That it be noted that no declarations of the party whip were raised.

O&S/6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS

RESOLVED – That it be noted that there are no excluded items on the Agenda.

O&S/7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

RESOLVED – That it be noted that no questions, representations, deputations or petitions have been received in respect of this meeting.

O&S/8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

The Chairman provided an update on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, she explained the Committee sought to support the Council in reviewing policies and matters which relate to the Budget and Policy Framework. She stated the Committee will have a further meeting on 17 July 2020 where the Committee will be receiving an update on COVID-19 from the Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources, David Sykes. The Chairman explained she had been involved in a number of Emergency Decisions that had taken place during the pandemic and so was comfortable that as the Chairman of the Committee, she had been fully aware of all Emergency Executive and Non- Executive Decisions.

The Chairman proposed that the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and training for Committee members would be delegated to herself as Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Mark Wilson and Councillor Janette Jenkinson, working together with the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) and Rachel Ireland, Case Management Officer. This work would then be brought

back to the July meeting with proposals for the year ahead. The Chairman ended the update by conveying to Members the Council was not in business as usual times, and the Committee must achieve the correct balance between effective scrutiny and appreciating that the Council was working in unprecedented times.

The Chairman thanked and praised Officers for their ardent work during these times.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the Overview and Scrutiny update be noted; and
- (2) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme and Member training be delegated to a select group of Members for review, and fed back to the Committee at the 17 July 2020 meeting, with the assistance from Officers.

O&S/9

REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2019/20

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder presented the Revenue and Capital Outturn 2019/20 report which set out the Council's financial performance for 2019-20 and the impact on reserves. The Portfolio Holder communicated to Members that the Council was operating in unparalleled times and if it was not for the COVID-19 pandemic, the budget would have been balanced. He highlighted a shortfall in income of parking and caravan sites in particular, and brought to Members' attention certain variances as outlined in the report. He concluded his report by thanking officers for their hard work during the current situation and hoped Members had found the report useful.

In response to Members questions the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained the issue of Kerbside recycling and went into further detail about Employment costs as the Council's largest single element of expenditure. He also clarified why the write off of debts continued to cause an overspend.

The Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) further explained that some debts were becoming quite elderly which could lead to an overview of all debts. However, she explained that we, as a Council, were in an interesting situation, peoples' finances were uncertain and that debt recovery had currently been suspended due to COVID-19. She stated the Council were looking at reconsidering this while taking into consideration peoples' circumstances.

In responding to a question on the current debt of Town View Fields at Kendal the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained that he would need to clarify this area as there were no weekly rent reviews available to show this and he did not have this information at this time.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the outturn figures be noted; and
- (2) the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be taken forward as appropriate for consideration by Cabinet.

O&S/10 2019/20 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20 was presented by the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder. He informed the Committee that the Council's amount of borrowing was less than 50%, lower than the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities recommends and that borrowing remained low. He explained that the level of actual external debt has remained at £12.8 million which is below the Capital Financing Requirement of £18.5 million.

The Portfolio Holder stated the generated income for the Council was similar to that of last year. Nevertheless, there was considerable uncertainty for the future. He explained income rates may increase but Officers would keep the situation under constant review and would work with other authorities on this.

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder again thanked Officers for their hard work on producing this systematic report.

In response to a Member's suggestion to increase borrowing during the COVID-19 pandemic due to lower interest rates, the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder agreed this could be considered by the Council. Yet, he explained borrowing would be under close review and at present, borrowing had stopped for commercial investments.

RESOLVED – That Council be recommended to approve the 2019/20 Treasury Management Annual Report.

Note – at this point in the proceedings Members proposed a short adjournment which was agreed and announced by the Chairman. The meeting adjourned at 11.22 a.m. The meeting reconvened at 11.27 a.m. and the Legal, Governance and Democratic Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) took a further roll call to confirm that the same Members were in attendance at the reconvened meeting and to confirm that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in the meeting.

O&S/11 CARBON REDUCTION TARGET AND GREEN TEAM UPDATE

The Sustainability Coordinator, Hannah Girvan, presented the Carbon Reduction Target and Green Team Update to Members by means of a presentation. She stated in February 2019 the Council declared a Climate Change emergency. She explained there were District wide targets set and in order to meet those targets, the Council should have knowledge of the District's carbon footprint to which she noted was 2611 tons. She drew Members' attention to the Pie Chart in her presentation which showed all the District's emissions based on consumption data. She explained this equated to a Cumbria wide total of 12 mega tons.

The Sustainability Coordinator went on to list examples of the Council working with partners, highlighting Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) as an important partner and discussed the Ambleside to Zero project. She explained to Members there was an increase within the Action Plan to reduce the amount of waste and to develop a green travel protocol. She stated there will be the introduction of a Climate Change Community Fund whereby groups can apply for funding.

The Sustainability Coordinator then handed over to the Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder to further discuss the report.

The Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder emphasised that the Council clearly takes the business of Climate Change seriously and recognised the emergency. She explained the Team had met with Parishes, businesses and the internal Green Team has developed the Green Board which would be operational from July 2020. She described there had been regular meetings under the direction of the Leader, Councillor Giles Archibald. The Portfolio Holder stated the Board had influenced and held discussions with other leaders. She went on to explain the dates and targets within the Action Plan stating that they set ambition to deliver what the Council can, whenever, and where it can. She highlighted to Members that due to changes in technology some extra resources may become available to further develop the Action Plan.

The Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder provided Members with the reasons behind the creation of the Climate Change Community Fund. She stated there were clear links with Council priorities and this would be clear on the ground action where responsibilities and decisions could be shared. The Environment Portfolio Holder thanked the Sustainability Coordinator for her work and passion for subject.

In response to the report, some Members expressed that the Action Plan did not appear to be urgent, but yet a long term target with a disconnect to the idea of an emergency. Dan Hudson, Strategy Lead Specialist explained the Action Plan should be taken as a trial run which would expand in the future, in terms of the urgency. He stated on the subject of Planning Policy, the Council is quite constrained due to government policy being very restrictive.

One Member proposed additional funding should be made available for the project, commenting that the ambition of the Action Plan does not reflect the available resources. The Chairman noted this recommendation.

Members then created discussion around the need for clarification on the Council's targets, specifically, the Council target is set for 2030 whereas the Cumbria wide target is 2037. Members questioned why the County wide target could not match the District target, or if indeed the Council was too ambitious. The Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder felt it necessary to bring to Members' attention that the Government target is 2050, which demonstrates the Council's commitment and initiative. Members further debated the necessity for residents to embrace these targets.

Members also highlighted the need for those in rural areas to be involved in the Action Plan and consulted, such as the Farmer Network. The Strategy Lead Specialist reassured Members that both the Farmer Network and the NFU were on the partnership and had involvement in discussions. The re-thinking of the Glossary was also discussed by Members in which they requested it be updated, specifically the Kyoto Protocol as this was now replaced by Paris Climate Agreement.

Members further emphasised the importance of Air Quality and the measuring of this, and to increase the reduction of idling engines. Moreover, one Member brought up the issue of Street Lighting and asked how the Council was addressing this to be more energy efficient and made reference to the impact on biodiversity. The Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder highlighted that in order to tackle this issue more County involvement would be required, and stressed the importance of developing strong relationships with other authorities to gain influence.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) addressed the Leader, Councillor Giles Archibald to clarify the figure for any proposal of additional

funding. The Leader stated he was content for a figure to be specified or to possibly note an increased amount.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) provided a summary of Members' comments and responses to the report (*Table Below*). All Members confirmed they were pleased with the wording and summary. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) then repeated the recommendations and reiterated the Committee's strong position around financing and prioritisation for Cabinet.

Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Members Comments

Member Question - That the targets set in the Action Plan and the funding relationship needs to be explained and explored further. (In particular pages 77, 88 and 89)

Is the lack of funding/resources driving the setting of longer term targets? What is the impact of this on the health and wellbeing of our communities? Should more resources be allocated?

Cabinet Response - We will be issuing a new draft document which will remove the definitions of short term, medium term and long term targets. To avoid any confusion.

Member Question - The relationship to Development Control/ Planning Committee and Strategic Planning Policy needs to be aligned.

How will the action plan influence and inform the Local Plan process? How do we ensure the 2 work streams are aligned and inform each other?

Cabinet Response - This is considered to be a very valid comment and we will work to ensure that the emerging Local Plan has the required policies to reflect our ambitions. Of course in the context of balancing other competing priorities.

Member Question - Can we deliver the targets set, 2030 and 2037?

Cabinet Response - Yes, we are seeking to achieve the 2030 targets and will take the necessary steps within our powers and resources to achieve this.

Member Question - What is the Governance around the Cumbria wide target?

Cabinet Response - The Cumbria Wide Working Group is part of this Governance. Under the direction of the Director of Public Health at the CC.

Member Question - Is the community really embracing the climate change agenda?

Cabinet Response - We have seen more support during the COVID Crisis and we do believe the community is embracing the challenges.

Member Comment – The glossary requires updating.

Cabinet Response – This has been updated.

Member Comment – Air Quality requires reference, Clean Air Day and School Safety Zones.

Cabinet Response – Reference to Air Quality now inserted in the draft document.

Member Comment – Can we look other funding sources/ models and options e.g. grant funding, credit unions other alternatives need to be explored.

Cabinet Response – This will be part of the work programme.

Member Comment – How are we influencing the County Council to increase the use of bicycles?

Cabinet Response – Through existing networks and partnerships.

Member Comment – Street Lighting, how are we addressing this and more energy efficiency? Referenced impact on biodiversity.

Cabinet Response – We agree this is an area that could be improved and we encourage joint working and collaboration with all partners.

Member Question – How do we ensure that the costs to the community in working with us to achieve this action plan and the targets are proportionate, e.g. Heat pumps and solar panels?

Cabinet Response – We need to engage with our partners, businesses and await further resources from central government to achieve a UK target of 2050. Markets need to be further developed to drive costs down.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the comments outlined by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the SLDC's Climate Change Action Plan be provided to Cabinet and for consideration at the Council meeting;
- (2) the SLDC Climate Change Policy be amended to commit the Council as an organisation to be seeking to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030 to Cabinet and for consideration at the Council meeting;
- (3) the SLDC Climate Change Policy be amended to support a Cumbria wide target of Carbon neutrality by 2037 and to take the necessary steps within its powers and resources to achieve this to Cabinet and for consideration at the Council meeting; and
- (4) recommended that the funding is increased towards the establishment of the Climate Change Community Fund set out in paragraph 3.10 to the report.

O&S/12

CUMBRIA CHOICE BASED LETTINGS ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

The Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder provided a brief update on the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy Review which would be formally brought in to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment at their next meeting on 17 July 2020. The lead officer of the review, Julie Jackson, Principal Housing Specialist, provided more detail on the review of the policy and explained the ongoing local consultation process which would end on 6 July 2020.

The Chairman asked Members to receive this verbal update and sought volunteers to form a group to meet with the Lead Officer. The Chairman explained the group's intention would be to review all documents and bring forward points for consideration at the next meeting, with all points raised first being circulated to all Members of the Committee prior.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy Review update be noted; and
- (2) a separate group of Members were to review all documents and bring points forward to Members at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

O&S/13**CUMBRIA HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Councillor Mark Wilson, who sat on the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee as a County Councillor, provided Members with an update. He stated despite the Committee not recently having met, the Committee continued to carry out extensive work. He explained the Committee was becoming a more integrated system, especially through their work with Morecambe Bay and Lancaster Care.

RESOLVED - That the update be noted.

The meeting ended at 1.38 p.m.