

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date of Meeting:** 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Present:** Cllr Johnson (Chair)  
Cllrs L.Barnes, Brennan, Gill, Kempson, Kenyon, Morris,  
Pendlebury (subbing for Janet Eaton) and Procter  
Z. Ali (Co-opted Member)

**In attendance:** Neil Shaw, Chief Executive  
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager  
Carl Bell, The Whitaker  
Rachel Whippey and Nick Pilling, Citizens Advice (CA)  
Ken Masser, Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT)  
Karen Ruane, Community Leisure Association Whitworth (CLAW)  
Dawn Vear and David Whatmough, First Choice Credit Union  
John Doherty and Eileen Goodwin, Bacup Credit Union

**Also Present:** Cllr Lythgoe  
4 members of the public

---

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Janet Eaton (Cllr Pendlebury subbing).

### **2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 3.1 Councillor Procter declared non-pecuniary interests that she was trust member of CA and a member of the First Choice Credit Union.
- 3.2 Councillor Morris declared a non-pecuniary interest that he was a RLT board member.

### **4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

- 4.1 The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items of business.

### **5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

- 5.1 No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting. The Chair noted that she would allow questions to be asked on each item as it was discussed.

## **6. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

- 6.1 The Chair reminded members to respond to the work programme consultation.

## **PARTNER PRESENTATIONS**

## **7. THE WHITAKER**

- 7.1 Carl Bell provided members with a video on the progress of The Whitaker and also noted the following:

- The building keys would be handed over on 14<sup>th</sup> April, after which work would commence getting the interior ready and Covid safe for re-opening.
- They were looking to create more youth links and opportunities for bigger funding bids following the merger with RLT.
- There were currently two part-time community workers funded until 2022.
- They had managed to recruit over 30 volunteers during lockdown and were aiming for 50 to help support the planned activities and events.
- They were looking to create stronger governance arrangements.
- They were also seeking charitable status.

- 7.2 In response to members' questions and comments the following clarification was given:

- In relation to funding, they were looking to become financially self-reliant by the end of 2022/23.
- The Whitaker had socio-economic and cultural audience targets and had a 12-18 month plan.
- They were not creating additional parking at present, but there was additional space at the back of the building and more space available at the bottom.
- They were looking to combine activities with RLT and Ski Rossendale and work together.
- They were looking to open a shop as well as the café.

### **Resolved:**

The update was noted and Carl agreed to provide members with a copy of the audience targets.

## **8. CITIZENS ADVICE**

- 8.1 Rachel Whippey gave a presentation to members, which outlined the work of Citizens Advice (CA) in Rossendale, including:

- How they had been working during Covid over the last 12 months.
- Engaging with other services and having an Influencers Group.
- Providing housing advice and advocacy and assisting clients facing eviction.
- Assisting with Universal Credit claims via the helpline, which could make three way calls to speed up the process (e.g. with DWP or Language Line).
- There was increased demand for debt advice and a new funded post had been created.
- CA would be a Census support centre helping people to complete the forms.
- A breakdown of achievements from the previous year was provided.
- They had seen an increase in assistance sought from people under 30.

Nick Pilling thanked the Council for the funding support received and informed that CA was looking to refresh their governance and have a more diverse board. Councillors were asked to get in touch if they knew anyone interested. Zieda agreed to assist targeting relevant groups if the advert could be provided.

- 8.2 In response to a member's questions the following clarification was given:
- There was a Universal Credit Helpline and people could be referred to CA if residents needed help.

**Resolved:**

The update was noted and Rachel agreed to provide members with the Universal Credit Helpline number.

**9. CREDIT UNIONS**

- 9.1 Dawn Vear provided members with an overview of the work of the First Choice Credit Union over the last year:
- Adult and junior members had dropped in the last year.
  - Adult savings were up but borrowing was down which created risk from a regulatory perspective as lending was based on ratios.
  - In many cases, loans had been refused owing to affordability to repay.
  - Where a loan had been refused, the person would be referred to CA or other suitable organisation.
  - Some people were struggling to repay loans owing to problems with employment or working less hours and this was having a negative impact on the Loan Book.
  - The NIVO mobile app was saving time by moving processes online.
  - Four staff were still working from the offices but they were closed to the volunteer workers.
  - They were involved in community support such as the Red Bag Project, Raft and Hospice collections, and also the Windows of Wonder.

David Whatmough informed that they relied on memberships and thanked councillors for their support and encouraged their continued support in the future.

- 9.2 John Doherty provided members with a presentation on the work of the Bacup Credit Union as follows:
- Take up had dropped since last March.
  - Since the Covid outbreak they had been looking at new ways of working.
  - There had been improved communications through the use of remote meetings.
  - There was online provision for customers and an upgraded website.
  - There were less face to face customers and there were still challenges as some vulnerable people had limited access opportunities.
  - By September they were expecting to see an increase in loan debt.
  - The key themes of the business plan were outlined, including increasing memberships in schools.

**Resolved:**

The updates were noted.

---

**N.B.** Councillors L.Barnes and Johnson left the meeting. Councillor Kempson chaired the meeting for the remaining items.

---

## **10. LEISURE**

10.1 Karen Ruane informed members of the recent merger with RLT and CLAW and thanked the Council for supporting the proposition.

10.2 Ken Masser provided members with a brief update summarising the work of RLT and a link to a video would be shared with members. The following was also noted:

- Some facilities had opened late summer/autumn, but had since had to close owing to Covid.
- Grant funding support was outlined including the discretionary grants.
- They had been working on community support projects such as the cardiac rehabilitation programme, support for schools, the virtual mile and 21 minute challenge.

10.3 In response to members and public questions the following clarification was given:

- The annual accounts were available through the FCA and Ken agreed they would also be published on the RLT website.
- After Covid they were looking to grow gym membership and encourage previous members to resume their membership.
- There would be new challenges but also opportunities with the merger with CLAW and the Whitaker.
- The combination of culture, arts, and health and well-being would go nicely with the physical offer.
- It was expected to be financially sustainable within 2 years.
- They would attract people back by campaigning and encouraging the full year up-front membership payment offer.
- There would be a change to governance with two people from Whitworth joining the board for Whitworth focus/direction.

### **Resolved:**

The update was noted and it was agreed to circulate the video link to members.

The Chair thanked all partners for attending and providing updates to the committee.

## **ORDINARY BUSINESS**

### **11. DISCUSSION ON FUTURE INVITEES FOR 2022**

11.1 Members made the following suggestions for future invitees, for agreement by the Chair, and also for the work programme:

- To stagger partner sessions to allow more time for questions.
- To have RLT, CLAW and the Whitaker for one session and put CA and the credit unions together for another session.
- The following partners were also suggested as possible invitees for future meetings: East Lancs Railway, Police, Fire Service, LCC, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Food Banks and Rossendale Connected.

- To give attendees more specific briefs about what they are coming to update the committee about, such as where is the funding spent, the position going forward, and whether they are delivering their targets.
- Ask CCG about access for people with mental health issues.
- To follow up on the outcomes of the previous Suicide Task and Finish Group.

11.2 In response to a member's questions the following clarification was given:

- The Police attended each year in November/December.

**Resolved:**

That the above suggestions would be added to the draft work programme and discussed with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny.

**12. THE FORWARD PLAN**

12.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan and the agenda for the June committee was outlined. This would be considered alongside the suggestions for the work programme for the upcoming meetings.

**Resolved:**

The update was noted.

**The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.40pm**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_