

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 6 September 2021 at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors Ibison, Matthew Vincent, Le Marinel, I Amos, Fail, Leech, Longton, Minto, O'Neill and Webster

Apologies for absence:

Councillors Sir R Atkins, R Amos and Ballard

Other councillors present:

Councillors Berry and Henderson

Officers present:

Marianne Unwin, Democratic Services Officer

Neil Greenwood, Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety

David Thow, Head of Planning Services

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

15 Declarations of interest

None.

16 Confirmation of minutes

Councillor Fail requested there be an amendment to the draft minutes (minute 11) of the meeting held on 19 July 2021, to include the reasons why it was not possible for a public convenience to be located at Rossall Hospital in Fleetwood, which members of the committee **agreed**. Therefore, the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2021 were **approved** as a correct record with the inclusion of the following sentences:

Danfo were asked to review a facility on the new car park of the Rossall Beach Management Scheme, where the former site offices were located. The Engineering team advised that this section is on the wrong side of the rising utility main and therefore not able to tap in to. Thus, Danfo considered a facility requiring a cess pit, which would make a facility considerably more

expensive and financially unviable.

17 **Planning Enforcement update**

The Head of Planning Services, David Thow, submitted a report on the planning enforcement function of the council.

David Thow attended the meeting to present the report and responded to questions posed by members. He updated members about the planning enforcement function of the council and highlighted the key points of interest within the report, including its purpose, the resources available, powers, caseloads.

Members asked several questions concerning the following topics:

- Enforcement officer roles and experience
- Recruitment, cost and resources
- The average time it takes for a complaint to be dealt with
- Solicitor time
- The backlog of cases and prioritisation
- Planning Enforcement Consultant
- The increase of cases since the Covid-19 pandemic
- Penalties for developers who break planning conditions

David Thow added that recruitment of council planning enforcement teams was difficult due to there being issues with career progression. He explained that the skills of the job are linked with that of policing, therefore enforcement usually include retired police officers.

Mr Thow explained to members that Wyre planning enforcement department on average received 300 cases per annum and that the time between cases varies. The prioritisation of cases was determined by weighing up the timescales left and the level of environmental harm caused by each case.

He updated members that the solicitor's role was not solely surrounding planning services. She explained that 85 per cent of her time was spent on planning issues, and within that, 10 per cent was on the support of the enforcement function and the turnaround of work varies again depending on the size of the case.

Mr Thow highlighted that the issues surrounding caseloads has a high dependency on the available resources at that time.

The Chairman expressed the importance of public confidence in our planning enforcement team and suggested that the council should publicise successful prosecutions.

The Chairman thanked David Thow for his report and attendance.

Review of the implementations of the recommendations of the Domestic Abuse Task Group: 5 years on

Councillor Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder provided the committee with a verbal update about the implementations of the recommendations of Domestic Abuse Task Group, which reported to Cabinet on 22 March 2017. Neil Greenwood, Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety also attended the meeting and assisted with responses to questions from members.

Councillor Berry welcomed the new the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 that had recently been passed by parliament and updated members on the contents of the Act. He highlighted to members that domestic abuse was a pan-Lancashire issue and the most recent figures in Wyre suggested that in the three-month period from May – July 2021 there were 362 domestic abuse offences compared to 301 in 2020 and 322 in 2019. He explained that over 25 per cent of the instances were alcohol-related, 70 per cent of the victims were female and 30 per cent male and the average age of victims were in the age bracket 30 – 39-year-olds. He explained the Wyre wards with the highest domestic abuse cases, which were Pharos, Park, Jubilee, Bourne and Mount; however, he highlighted that domestic abuse happened throughout Wyre.

He then reviewed each of the recommendations that were originally agreed by the Cabinet.

1. That steps be taken by the council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel and/or the Portfolio Holder and officers of the council to make representations to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure that the views of Wyre Council, as a recognised stakeholder, are taken into account throughout the process of performance monitoring of the newly commissioned service.

It was explained that Wyre received good support from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel. Councillor Berry underlined that over the last municipal year the service had supported 361 victims of these 242 received long-term support such as rehousing and 119 received brief interventions such as safety planning. He additionally praised the work and support of Fylde Coast Women's Aid.

Members asked if there could be a breakdown of the number of domestic abuse cases with the wards that have the highest number, to which Neil Greenwood said he would provide an update to be sent round to members following the meeting.

2. That all councillors be offered and encouraged to take part in domestic abuse training, to be delivered by the end of March 2018.

Councillor Berry updated members that this training had been delivered in 2018 and suggested that the training be repeated in 2022.

3. That the Council continues to support and promote the annual White Ribbon Campaign.

He explained that the council continued to support the annual White Ribbon Campaign, but the Covid-19 pandemic had affected the ability for certain functions from taking place, however, illustrated that the Wyre Community Safety Partnership wished to action various campaigns going forward.

Neil Greenwood explained that the Wyre Community Safety Partnership had applied to the Police Crime Commissioners Office for grant funding to facilitate the No Excuse for Abuse campaign. This had been accepted.

4. That the Council appoints two councillors and two officers as Domestic Abuse Champions.

Councillor Berry explained that the council did in fact appoint these positions in 2018. He updated members that, due to personal circumstances, two new councillor Domestic Abuse Champions needed to be appointed to fill the current vacancies.

5. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives a briefing report, preferably specific to the Wyre Council area, from the council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel or the Portfolio Holder about the newly commissioned service at the beginning of the 2018/19 Municipal Year.
6. That the report from the council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel or the Portfolio Holder to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the beginning of the 2018/19 Municipal Year includes comments about the implementation of each of the task group's recommendations.

Councillor Berry updated members that the final two recommendations were completed in 2018.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Berry and Neil Greenwood for their attendance and contributions.

19 Business Plan 2021/22 - Quarterly Performance Statement (Quarter 1: April - June)

The Corporate Director Communities submitted a report on the first Quarter Performance Statement 2021/22 (April – June 2021).

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed concerns over the following topics:

- Fleetwood Regeneration Framework and the impact on local jobs and vacancy rates

- The membership of the town centre Partnership Boards and Wyre ward councillors receiving updates from the boards' work
- The selling of Bourne Hill surplus and the potentiality of zero-carbon housing on the land
- An update from the leisure review

The questions posed by members were sent to the relevant officers for their consideration.

It was also suggested that the committee should involve Portfolio Holders more frequently when monitoring the Business Plan Quarterly Performance reports.

It was **agreed** that the report was noted.

20 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22 – update report

The Corporate Director Resources, Clare James, submitted a report to update the committee about the delivery of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22.

The Democratic Services Officer, Marianne Unwin, provided the committee with a verbal update.

The committee discussed potential future review focuses as highlighted in the report. Members **agreed** that the YMCA Fylde Coast contract review, Town Centres review, Wyre's Call-in procedures review, Lancashire Super Hospital review and March Mill review were not current main priorities of the council, therefore should be moved to the looking further ahead section of the programme.

Members wished to receive clarification surrounding a possible review of caravan holiday site occupancy and residential status, to which Marianne Unwin agreed to circulate following the meeting.

It was **agreed** that the report be noted.

21 Overview and Scrutiny training session

The Democratic Services Officer, Marianne Unwin, addressed the committee and invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to attend an in-house training session on Thursday 14 October at 6 pm in the Council Chamber.

Ms Unwin explained to members that the session would act as a refresher on scrutiny and would focus on the Work Programme prioritisation guide. She highlighted the importance of the session for member's development and especially in light of the recent Centre for Governance and Scrutiny review.

Marianne Unwin agreed to circulate an email to members asking them to respond with their availability.

The meeting started at 6.01 pm and finished at 7.50 pm.

Date of Publication: Tuesday 28 September 2021.