

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 5 September 2022 at the Committee Room 2 - Civic Centre.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors I Amos, Sir R Atkins, Cartridge, E Ellison, Fail, Ibison, Kay, Le Marinel, Longton, Matthew Vincent and Webster

Apologies for absence:

Councillors Ballard, Minto and O'Neill

Other councillors present:

Councillor Berry

Officers present:

Marianne Unwin, Democratic Services Officer
Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities
Carl Green, Head of Engineering

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

15 Declarations of interest

None.

16 Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 18 July were confirmed as a correct record.

17 Review of the implementations of the recommendations of the Citizens Advice Lancashire West Task Group - one year on

The Corporate Director Communities, Marianne Hesketh, and the Chief Executive of Citizens Advice Lancashire West, Diane Gradwell, attended the meeting and provided an update on the implementations of the recommendations of the Citizens Advice Lancashire West Task Group and the general performance of the service.

The Chairman introduced Marianne and Diane and read out the

recommendations that were originally agreed by Cabinet, which were:

1. The Cabinet wholeheartedly support the continuation of Wyre Council working with Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW).
2. That the council explore the feasibility of a trial into the Digital Service Hub proposed by CALW. The group recommends that this be included in any negotiations with CALW to advise on the best location for such a service.

Marianne updated members that following the task group's report, Cabinet agreed to enter into a three-year service level agreement with Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW) for the provision of welfare advice services in the borough until 31 May 2024 at a cost of £30,000 per annum. She also explained that Cabinet agreed to participate in a trial of digital service kiosks at a number of locations in Wyre at a cost of £8,000, however, added that there had been a delay in the implementation of the trial.

Diane Gradwell addressed the committee. She explained that Citizens Advice Lancashire West covered five local authority areas Blackburn, Chorley, South Ribble, West Lancashire and Wyre. The service continued to function throughout the course of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns and enabled staff and volunteers to work remotely. She updated that the service was back to offering face-to-face appointments at the Fleetwood office which was based in Fleetwood Market. There was also the use of the telephone and web chat advice line, which was open 24 hours a day 7 days a week to ensure, no client was missed. Diane updated the committee that owing to funding from a national contract, there had been an increase in full time debt caseworkers from six to 20. It was explained that one of the biggest problems facing the organisation was the falling number of volunteers and that work was ongoing to recruit new volunteers.

Diane provided members with a summary of the key figures relevant to Wyre from the last 12 months, these were:

- Through the household support fund, the CALW distributed £89,000 to 423 residents
- Distributed £14,500 worth of food vouchers
- Helped 193 residents with disability benefits claim over £648,000
- Managed £3,544,351 worth of debt
- Minimum donation of volunteer time was £40,000
- Received over 25,000 calls to the advice line
- 564 clients received face-to-face support
- 50,000 Wyre residents accessed the advice pages on the CALW website

She added that, following the meeting, she would share with the committee national cost of living data relevant to Wyre and that this data could be provided to the committee on an ongoing basis.

She highlighted the importance of the development of the service such as recruitment of volunteers and outreach opportunities to other areas across Wyre.

In response to a question, Diane updated members that the CALW had one office in Wyre located in Fleetwood Market, which employed one supervisor, one debt caseworker and volunteers. She added that local authorities and the Money Advice and Pension Service (MAPS) funded the organisation.

In response to a question regarding the levels of volunteers and the impact on face-to-face services, Diane highlighted the recent hurdles to providing face-to-face support due to the move to more online services.

The Chairman asked about the issues with the digital kiosk implementation. Diane explained the work was halted due to the sudden death of the Services Manager, Guy Simpson, who was leading the project and other staff illness. She also explained the pressure on the in house IT team in order to manage the online service; however, the trial was still something they wished to develop.

Following a question, Diane clarified that the help to claim service for Lancashire was led by Burnley Citizens Advice.

Diane highlighted that debt was the main issue they provided residents with advice and casework. She explained that they were currently investigating gambling addiction and the future possibility of bidding for funds to support the work.

Following a question, Marianne Hesketh explained that Wyre Council contributed £30,000 per annum, which was equivalent to one employed post. Diane added that out of the five authority areas, Wyre provided the lowest monetary contribution, but Wyre did benefit owing to economies of scale.

Members **agreed** that it would be beneficial to their residents for the CAWL to have greater outreach across Wyre, specifically the rural areas of the borough.

Diane highlighted the importance of offering face-to-face interviews and provided members with an example of a face-to-face interview with a client where additional issues were noticed that may have been missed if the interaction took place online or over the phone.

Councillor Longton asked a question regarding the demand for the CALW service owing to the cost of living crisis. Diane explained that the service was currently extremely busy.

In response to questions about training volunteers, Diane explained that training time was dependent on the role and can be between six to 10 months. This was a vigorous training programme. She added that volunteering could involve a lot of pressure on the individual, but there was support in place from paid members of staff. She added the majority of staff were volunteers.

Diane shared with members the result of the CALW Leadership Self-Assessment audit. The service scored five across all areas.

Following a question, Diane explained that they did offer a service where solicitors and accountants provided pro bono work.

Following discussions about resources, Diane stressed the need for volunteers. The committee suggested that there should be some communications, regarding the recruitment of volunteers, created for councillors to share on their personal social media pages. Councillors also suggested for this to be shared on the council's social media pages and website.

Councillor Andrea Kay and the Chairman suggested that the libraries and parish and town councils across Wyre might be good avenues for outreach.

The Chairman concluded by thanking Diane Gradwell for her attendance and contributions.

The meeting was adjourned for a couple of minutes whilst the Democratic Services Officer showed Diane Gradwell out of the Civic Centre.

18 Hillhouse Enterprise Zone

The Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Councillor Alice Collinson, and the Corporate Director Communities, Marianne Hesketh, submitted a report to review the work of Hillhouse Enterprise Zone and its future work and priorities against its role and remit.

The Corporate Director Communities, Marianne Hesketh, attended the meeting to present the report and responded to questions from committee members.

Marianne explained to members that Wyre Council acted as the accountable body for the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone resulting in business rate growth on the site from 1 April 2016 the council kept and was reinvested back into the Enterprise Zone. The role of the council was to develop growth and infrastructure. Marianne added that NPL were the landowners.

Marianne highlighted to members that currently Hillhouse Enterprise Zone was successful as there were several local and international businesses on the site.

Committee members asked questions regarding:

- The effect of the rise in energy prices on businesses situated on Hillhouse
- The expected target of business rate growth
- The vacant property on the site
- The number of jobs on the site
- Filling new business units

- Travel access to the site and the requirement for a bridge over the track of the proposed Fleetwood to Poulton Rail line
- The facilitation of the Hydrogen Stirring Group at the Civic Centre

Following a question regarding the target number of jobs on the site by 2035, Marianne Hesketh explained that work was undergoing to review the original Hillhouse Enterprise Zone masterplan. She added that many of the businesses on the site were technology based rather than labour intensive. There was difficulty in finding suitable candidates for job vacancies for all the businesses on the Hillhouse site, which Wyre Council supported finding a solution.

Following future discussions, the committee endorsed the update report.

19 Business Plan 2022/23, Quarterly Performance Statement (Quarter 1: April - June)

It was moved to change the order of business on the agenda. The committee resolved that item seven of the agenda be heard before item six of the agenda.

The Corporate Director Communities submitted a report on the First Quarter Performance Statement 2022/23 (April – June 2022). Marianne Hesketh attended the meeting and answered questions from elected members.

Councillor Peter Le Marinel asked a question relating to the amber status of the number of memberships at Wyre's leisure centres and the effect it may have on people who pay yearly for a membership. Marianne explained that the impact of the cost of living crisis could reflect the number of memberships to Wyre's leisure centres and that this was under constant monitoring.

It was also asked about the potential increase in energy costs and the risk of opening hours at Wyre's leisure centres owing to the cost of living crisis. Marianne reassured members that YMCA was undergoing some work to identify energy efficiency measures.

The Chairman highlighted to members that government intervention regarding energy prices was yet to be confirmed.

Members discussed that there were no public electric charging points installed in quarter one. Members were reassured that the order had been placed and the installation was due to start in the early autumn.

The Chairman thanked Marianne Hesketh for her contributions.

The meeting was adjourned for a couple of minutes whilst the Democratic Services Officer brought in invited guests from the waiting room.

20 Review of the implementations of the recommendations of the Residents Parking Permit Scheme Task Group

Councillor Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder and Carl Green, Head of Engineer, attended the meeting to provide the committee with a verbal update about the implementations of the recommendations of the Residents Parking Permit Scheme Task Group, which reported to Cabinet on 25 March 2020.

Before discussing this item, members asked a question about the Wyre Beach Management Scheme and the recent increase in costs for the compound works and the impact this may have on the restoration of the Jubilee Gardens Park. Carl reassured members that the increase in costs should not affect the work and there was £500,000 set aside for restoration works after the completion of the scheme.

Councillor Berry handed out to members a paper copy of a report, which addressed off-street parking issues in the borough of Wyre, including parking charges, permitting and enforcement. He highlighted to members that the resident parking scheme had been up and running for over two years. The permit cost £30.00 and was valid for two years. The permit was for use of parking at Wyre Council's car parks once per day up to a maximum of three hours; holders were not allowed to move from car park to car park. Councillor Berry added that there were approximately 2000 permits sold since its introduction.

Committee members asked questions regarding:

- Car park enforcement wardens
- Cashless payments on the council's car parks
- Electric charging point use and enforcement
- The overnight parking for motorhome/camper vans on the Central Car Park, Fleetwood
- Disabled car parking at Central Car Park, Fleetwood
- Private registrations

The Chairman thanked Councillor Berry and Carl Green for their attendance and contributions.

21 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23 – 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 2022/23.

The Democratic Services Officer, Marianne Unwin, introduced the report to the committee. She explained, as agreed at their last meeting, that the questions members raised were attached at appendix 2. Members **agreed** to the wording of the questions and for them to be circulated to the Lancashire

and South Cumbria Integrated Care System invited guests before the 17 October 2022 Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

She also brought members' attention to the single item agenda to review Wyre Council's business plan. The Chairman suggested that this should be a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee members where they review a draft version of the business plan and other related documents. The comments and findings arising from members would then be shared with the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet members and then added to the January meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee where the Leader and Chief Executive would be invited to provide comments. To which members **agreed**.

Councillor Matthew Vincent questioned the potential of the committee commissioning a task group to address Wyre's response to the cost of living crisis.

The report was noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.27 pm.

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