

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 26 February 2024 at the Committee Room 2 - Civic Centre.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors Cartridge, Baxter, Amos, Sir R Atkins, Blair, Bolton, Collinson, Fail, Higgs, Martin and A Walker

Absent- apologies received:

Councillor Beavers

Absent- apologies not received

None.

Other councillors present:

Councillor Berry

Officers present:

Daphne Courtenage, Democratic Services Officer
Neil Greenwood, Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety

Officers absent- apologies received:

None.

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

37 Declarations of interest

None.

38 Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 January 2024 were **confirmed** as a correct record by those who were in attendance.

39 Wyre Community Safety Partnership - annual scrutiny review

Councillor Roger Berry, the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, and Neil Greenwood, Head of Environmental Health and

Community Safety, attended the meeting to report on the activities of the Wyre Community Safety Partnership, as part of the committee's statutory requirements.

Councillor Berry introduced the report to members. He explained that the report set out the context of what had been undertaken to address the five priorities of the council: antisocial behaviour (ASB); violence against the person; domestic abuse; substance abuse; and road safety. He said he was pleased that there had been an overall improvement in the figures, which reflected the considerable amount of work and effort put in over the last 12 months, particularly with two major initiatives launched by the police – Operation Centurion and Clear, Hold, Build. The report also gave details of other activities and events undertaken with partners, including events on e-scooters at Asda, Fleetwood and "The Crucial Crew", an event with 400 Year 6 pupils across the borough discussing ASB, road safety and water safety.

There were still areas of concern, including violence against the person, causing increasing injury figures. This was mostly connected to alcohol consumption, and some drug-related incidents, which also gave emphasis to the importance of tackling the issue of drugs. Another concern was the continuing high levels of domestic abuse, with over 1,300 referrals and an increase in reporting of over 20%. Staff at GP surgeries were being encouraged to refer patients should they have concerns, and partners were working with schools on appropriate behaviour. The Portfolio Holder noted that it was sad to see this still increasing, but there was a need to understand the pressures that residents were facing that impacted these figures.

Members raised the following questions:

- The role of the council in tackling ASB and drug-related incidents
- The difference between theft and burglary, and how these figures are reported by the police
- The relationship between the council, police and other partners
- Concerns around the lack of action from police on certain matters
- Vehicle offences and the rise in reported figures
- Working proactively and identifying trends, particularly during specific times of the year
- Offences relating to cybercrime

The Portfolio Holder and Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety responded to questions raised by members. Councillor Berry explained that the council did have a responsibility to address incidents of ASB, however advise would be to report this to both the council and the police. In terms of drug related incidents, this was best addressed to the police. It was acknowledged that confidence in the police had been impacted due to complaints on the reporting process, and the wait time for action to be taken. This had been identified and the police were taking steps to address this. In response to a question on theft from supermarkets, Neil explained to members that the police took steps to target theft from supermarkets and had officers working closely with them. Ultimately however, it was the responsibility of the business to take steps to address this. An initiative called Shopwatch had been set up, which would take place initially in Fleetwood

before being rolled out.

In response to a question on responsibility, Neil explained that the council helped to coordinate youth and adult ASB multiagency groups, which were also location based. The police led on these, but the council could take action on issues such as inter-neighbour disputes. It was best to have a place where all partner agencies could come together and work together to address these issues.

Councillor Blair informed members of the ability to report incidents anonymously to Crimestoppers; the more incidents were reported, the more attention a specific area would receive. This could be of help to residents who may be fearful of reporting incidents, specifically drug related incidents.

In response to queries around vehicle offences, Councillor Berry and Neil explained that the numbers may reflect a variety of offences which came under the umbrella term 'vehicle offences'. The rise in theft of catalytic converters over a period of a few months in 2023 may have contributed to this rise. It was explained that the police are targeting more specific areas when trends are identified.

Members were informed of a priorities meeting, led by the police, that the Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety was invited to. The meeting looked at identifying trends on a monthly basis and any trends identified would then become a priority for the police.

The council did also act proactively and in response to trends. Neil informed members of an initiative held in 2023; the council organised a marshal service for the taxi trade in Poulton with the aim of reducing alcohol related incidents in the taxi rank queue, after identifying this area as a concern.

40 Review of the Tackling Youth Anti-Social Behaviour in Wyre Task Group - one year on

Councillor Roger Berry, the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, and Neil Greenwood, Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety, attended the meeting to report on the activities of the council in relation to the recommendations of the Youth Anti-Social Behaviour in Wyre Task Group, a year on.

Councillor Berry introduced the report. He explained to members that figures showed a decrease in youth ASB. One of the recommendations had been to organise and facilitate an event called The Wyre Beat, which was held in the summer of 2023, with the aim of engaging secondary school pupils in ASB through drama. The event was successful with the three secondary schools involved. The council was looking at potentially repeating this event in the future.

The council was engaging in a lot of work relating to youth ASB, focussing on alcohol-related incidents.

Members raised the following questions:

- An update on the guidance document provided by Garstang Town Council

The Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety and the Democratic Services Officer informed members that they had received the guidance document from the town council, and were in the process of circulating this amongst the town and parish councils in the borough.

The Chair thanked Councillor Berry and Neil Greenwood for attending the meeting and for their work in this area.

41 Business Plan 2023/24, Quarterly Performance Statement (Quarter 3: October - December)

The Corporate Director Communities, Marianne Hesketh, had submitted a report which informed members of the quarterly progress on the council's business plan projects and measures for 2023/24.

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report. She explained to members that she would take questions and comments and circulate responses to members.

Members asked for the following questions to be circulated to officers:

- Paragraph 3.2.2 of the report, "Proactive actions to reduce violence against the person and Anti-Social Behaviour (target 5% reduction each quarter" –did the 13% increase in reporting of domestic abuse conflict with the figures submitted in agenda item 4?
- Page 31 of the agenda pack, PGR4 "Explore external funding and investment opportunities for our key council assets including theatres, markets and leisure facilities" – Concerns relating to the works at Fleetwood Market, whose overall responsibility it was to deal with the issues being experienced and the delays to the works. For the future, it would be helpful to ensure a designated officer was in post to lead on this.
- Follow up on concerns relating to Fleetwood Market, did the council have a retention against the current contractor, and was there a process in place in case the council had to employ a different contractor to undertake the works?
- Further concerns on Fleetwood Market, was there a designated officer from the council taking the lead on overseeing the contracted works?
- Retention in terms of occupancy rates on Lord Street, Fleetwood; this was consistently identified as not meeting targets, what steps were being taken by the council to address this?
- Queries around the rating system and related colour coding on the reports

Following the meeting, questions were circulated to officers and responses received on the above questions and presented to the committee via email.

42 Citizens Advice Lancashire West Task Group - final report

The Chair of the Citizens Advice Lancashire West Task Group, Councillor

Peter Cartridge, introduced the report to members.

He informed members of the aims of the task group and read out the four recommendations to the committee.

Councillors asked how the proposed grant contribution payments to Citizens Advice would fit into the budget, considering it had not been a part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Members also raised questions over the potential for in-house provision and issues relating to this, and ensuring that services were extended across the borough.

The Democratic Services Officer reassured members that discussions around the grant contribution payments would be a matter for officers and Cabinet.

Following discussions, the committee agreed for the final report to be submitted to Cabinet at their meeting on the 20 March 2024 for approval.

43 Review of written responses to questions submitted to the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board

Following the meeting of the committee on 15 January 2024, representatives of the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) had submitted written responses to questions circulated by the committee.

Members reviewed the responses and raised concerns over continuing issues in regards to dental care.

Members agreed to follow up on the responses at a future meeting.

44 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 – update report

The Corporate Director Resources (S151 Officer), Clare James, submitted an update report on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24.

The Democratic Services Officer, Daphne Courtenage, introduced the report.

She updated members on the Work Programme Workshop, which had taken place on Thursday 15 February. She thanked those members who attended, and explained to members that officers would review arrangements for next year's workshop to allow for more members to attend.

Overall, three key areas were identified as priorities for 2024/25. These were:

- Communications
- Fly-tipping
- Economic Development & Visitor Economy Strategy

There were also a number of topics that had been identified as requiring updates to be brought before the committee. The next meeting, scheduled for 22 April 2024, would have the draft work programme for 2024/25 be presented to the committee for their review and comments.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 6.47 pm.

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