

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 22 April 2024 at the Committee Room 2 - Civic Centre.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

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

Absent- apologies received:

Councillors Beavers

Absent- apologies not received

Councillors Bolton and Collinson

Officers present:

Clare James, Director of Finance and Governance (S151)

Marianne Unwin, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager (Temporary)

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

47 Declarations of interest

None.

48 Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 26 February 2024 were **confirmed** as a correct record by those who were in attendance.

The minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 March 2024 were **confirmed** as a correct record by those who were in attendance.

49 Scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and Policies - Questions and Answers

The Director of Finance and Governance (S151 Officer), Clare James, submitted a question and answer pack as part of required Treasury Management training for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Clare James introduced the document and summarised the way in which the council carried out its treasury management responsibilities. She reminded members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were the council's nominated members to scrutinise the council's approach to treasury management and highlighted that training for members to carry out this role was essential.

Clare responded to a question from Councillor Sir Atkins regarding staffing in the finance department, in particular about the number of qualified accountants.

Clare summarised three key principles which provided members with a definition of treasury management. These were security, liquidity, and yield.

Members raised several questions and had discussions regarding the following matters:

- The role of the Government to assist councils in financial difficulties.
- Lending to other local authorities.
- The council's arrangement with Link Group asset services.
- The delegation to the Section 151 Officer and other members of the finance team.
- The authorisation process of payments and limits on spend.
- Changes to the Treasury Management Policy.
- Common themes between the councils who had recently issued section 114 notices.
- The benefits of treasury management to support a balanced budget.
- How Wyre Council compares to other councils across Lancashire in terms of reserves and balances.
- Wyre Council maintaining the position as a debt free council.
- The role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee members to hold the policy to account.
- Sharing the cost of future member training provided by Link with neighbouring authorities.
- The limited questions from councillors at Full Council.
- Audit reports regarding treasury management.
- The importance of the member Strengths and Development Questionnaires in order to identify training needs.
- The availability of emergency funds.
- Bank satisfaction.
- Ethical investment possibilities.
- The council's investment with Qatar.
- Options around investments within the UK only.
- The CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice focus on areas such as environmental, social and governance considerations.

Clare asked the committee to consider how treasury management training was covered going forward. She also encouraged members to revisit the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices, Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision

Policy Statement and Capital Strategy 2024/25 that was approved at the 7 March 2024 Council meeting and to contact her with any further questions.

The committee noted the questions and answers pack.

The Chair thanked Clare James for her attendance.

50 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25 - update and planning report

The Director of Finance and Governance (S151 Officer), Clare James, submitted a report on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2024/25.

The Chair, Councillor Cartridge, introduced the report and updated members that Cabinet considered the recommendations from the Citizens Advice Lancashire West task group and accepted the following recommendations:

3.1 That Cabinet renew the agreement between the council and Citizens Advice Lancashire West for four years.

3.2 That Cabinet considers increasing the grant contribution payment to Citizens Advice Lancashire West from £30,000 as per previous service agreement renewals (with free use of a number of Fleetwood Market units worth £18,000).

3.3 That within an updated service level agreement, the use of the units at Fleetwood Market be added to formalise the arrangement.

He updated the committee that Cabinet were unable to accept recommendation 3.4 as the digital kiosks were no longer being progressed by the Citizens Advice.

The Chair brought members attention to point 4.2 of the work programme report and requested members review the call-in procedure rules attached at Appendix 2.

Councillor Fail raised the following points:

- For the procedure rules to be amended to allow for more than one call-in spokesperson.
- For the procedure rules to be amended to ensure that the councillors who have called in the decision to be consulted around the setting of the date of the call-in meeting.
- For para 20.1 of Part 4.02 Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution to be amended to remove reference to “which is in the possession or control of the Cabinet or its Committees”.

The Chair noted the suggested amendments provided by Councillor Fail.

Following discussions, the committee came to a consensus to suggest an amendment to part 16.3 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure

Rules (relating to call-in procedures) to allow for the nomination of a substitute spokesperson, if necessary.

The committee **agreed** for Democratic Services to produce some best practice and benchmarking from other councils on how they approach call-in procedures, along with a draft updated Wyre Council call-in procedure rules to be presented at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting for consideration.

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager (Temporary), Marianne Unwin, clarified that any amendments to the Constitution would be subject to review by the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council and final approval by Full Council.

The committee **noted** the report.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.15 pm.

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