

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 25 June 2018 at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors John Ibison, Ian Amos, Rita Amos, Emma Anderton, Howard Ballard, Emma Ellison, Rob Fail, John Hodgkinson, Patsy Ormrod, Julie Robinson, Ron Shewan and Matthew Vincent

Apologies for absence:

None received.

Other councillors present:

Councillors Roger Berry and Lynne Bowen.

Officers present:

Neil Greenwood, Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officers

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

10 Declarations of interest

None.

11 Confirmation of minutes

It was agreed that minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 21 May 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

12 Food hygiene task group - implementation of recommendations

The Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety, Neil Greenwood, submitted a report. He attended the meeting with the Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder, Councillor Lynne Bowen.

Mr Greenwood confirmed that good progress had been made towards implementing all the task group's recommendations, which had been agreed by the Cabinet on 22 March 2017.

Food Safety information could now be accessed through the A-Z index on the council's website. Three prosecutions had been completed since the task group reported and for each of those the press release included reference to the Food Hygiene rating Scheme.

A letter had been sent from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to the Secretary of State in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, urging the Government to bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity to introduce a mandatory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, similar to that already operating in Wales. A response had been received from the Food Standards Agency confirming that the Government remained committed to introducing a mandatory scheme by 2020. A copy of the task group's report had also been sent to the Secretary of State, which seemed to have been well received. Mr Greenwood commented that there was a limit as to what action Wyre, as a small local authority, could take on its own before the mandatory scheme was introduced.

A member of the Food Safety Team attended each planning meeting for event being held in the borough to ensure that and food businesses involved had a Food Hygiene Rating of 3 or more. As a direct result of the task group's recommendation one business did not receive their award at the Wyre Business Awards because they did not have a Food Hygiene rating of 4 or 5.

Mr Greenwood confirmed that the number of establishments that were now considered broadly compliant (as guided by the Code of Practice) had increased from 89% to 95% since September 2016. He warned that this percentage could drop when changes were made by the introduction of additional compliance requirements in relation to allergies.

In response to questions from councillors Mr Greenwood added that, where establishments had low ratings and were often not displaying these clearly, efforts were made to try to encourage them to apply for reassessment. It was the business's responsibility to try to improve or the public's not to use them. There was a graduated approach to enforcement which involved the issue of an improvement notice and a caution before prosecution.

Councillor Bowen highlighted the comparatively high standards that were set for food safety in Wyre.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Bowen and Mr Greenwood for their report and contribution to this item.

13 Domestic abuse task group - implementation of recommendations

The Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety, Neil Greenwood, submitted a report. He attended the meeting with the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, Councillor Roger Berry.

Mr Greenwood confirmed that good progress had been made towards implementing all the task group's recommendations, which had been agreed by the Cabinet on 22 March 2017.

Councillor Berry attended quarterly meetings with the commissioned service, which enabled the council to make a positive contribution and to receive statistics that were relevant to the local area.

Arrangements had been made to make a presentation about domestic abuse to all councillors before the meeting of the Full Council on 6 September 2018. Information would also be provided about the White Ribbon Campaign. A promotional banner about the Campaign had recently been set up in the Reception area, very close to the entrance to the doctors' surgery. Mr Greenwood added that the council had appointed six domestic abuse champions, two councillors and four officers, including the Chief Executive.

Councillor Berry advised the committee that most referrals still came through the police, with the number coming from doctors' surgeries remaining low. An important message to promote was that appropriate referral did not depend upon police involvement. He added that Wyre was in a better position now with the commissioned service as good quality local information was readily available.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Berry and Mr Greenwood for their report and contribution to this item.

14 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2018/19 - update report

The Service Director Performance and Innovation, Marianne Hesketh, submitted a report.

The Scrutiny Officer, Peter Foulsham, provided updates on the task groups on flooding and the My Homes Choice consultation respectively.

The Chairman, Councillor John Ibison, drew the committee's attention to the report on cost profiles that had been considered by the Cabinet in October 2017. He said that the benchmarking results often gave indications about potential topics for scrutiny review and he invited members to give the report further consideration in this context. Councillor Ibison drew the committee's attention to paragraph 5.9 of the Cost Profiles report which summarised the council's expenditure on homelessness. Members agreed that it would be helpful to understand better the issues surrounding the expenditure on homelessness. Recognising that it was both a social and a health issue, it was agreed to raise the matter with representatives from the Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group who were due to attend the next meeting on 30 July 2018. Options for a possible task group review on this subject would also be explored.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 6.57 pm.

Date of Publication: 26 June 2018