

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 22 October 2018 in committee room 2 Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors John Ibison, Colette Birch, Emma Ellison, Rob Fail, John Hodgkinson, Patsy Ormrod, Julie Robinson, Ron Shewan, Evelyn Stephenson and Matthew Vincent

Apologies for absence:

Councillors Kerry Jones, Ian Amos, Rita Amos and Howard Ballard

Other councillors present:

Councillors Lady Dulcie Atkins, Lynne Bowen, David Henderson, Phil Orme and Brian Stephenson

Officers present:

Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Transformation
Julia Robinson, Commercial Manager
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

28 Declarations of interest

None.

29 Confirmation of minutes

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 10 September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

30 Wyre's entertainment venues

The Service Director Performance and Innovation (Marianne Hesketh) had submitted a report. The Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder (Councillor Lynne Bowen) and the Commercial Manager (Julia Robinson) attended the meeting to jointly present the report with Marianne Hesketh.

It was acknowledged that 2017/18 had been a difficult year from the Marine

Hall for a number of reasons, including the sad loss of the Head of Service, Ian Munro. In addition a lot of essential building maintenance was carried out which increased expenditure, as did the use of agency staff. Since then, however, the signs had been very positive, takings at the Marine Hall having increased by £55,000 this year already. Thornton Little Theatre was also doing very well, both venues having restructured their programmes to increase the number of promoters hiring the venues or agreeing to split box office takings, reducing the risk to the council. A wider range of events was also being promoted at both venues.

Councillors asked a number of questions to which Councillor Bowen and Julia Robinson responded and made the following additional comments:

- It was intended that the Marine Hall would use less agency staff in the future. Some staff worked at both the Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre.
- A Wedding Open Day would be held at the Marine Hall on the first Sunday after Valentine's Day. Weddings across a number of the council's venues would be promoted, as would local businesses and suppliers.
- The café at the Marine Hall was used to supplement a number of other events that were taking place. If the café was run by a commercial partner some of the other bookings that relied on the café as an integral part of their event might be lost. It was a question of balance.

The committee considered setting up a task group to look at the strategic focus for the Marine Hall, but concluded that it would be more appropriate to convene in six months' time, to give the Commercial Manager more time in post and for the current deficit to be reduced further.

It was agreed that

- (i) Councillor Lynne Bowen, Marianne Hesketh and Julia Robinson be thanked for their report and for attending the meeting, and
- (ii) That a further report on the Marine Hall be submitted to the committee in June 2019 as part of the Committee's Work Programme for 2019/20, with the intention of assisting the committee to scope a scrutiny task group review.

31 Flooding task group - draft report

The Chairman of the Flooding Task Group, Councillor Phil Orme, presented the group's draft report and recommendations. He underlined the expectation that residents take all reasonable steps to try to ensure that their own properties are resilient. He also highlighted that the recommendation that the use of sandbags be focused on (i) protecting critical assets and (ii) vulnerable residents, with support from the Flood Action Groups (FLAGs).

Members of the committee challenged a number of the task group's conclusions and recommendations, to which Councillor Orme responded by explaining the evidence that had been gathered during the review and the way in which this was directly reflected in the recommendations being made.

Some members of the committee expressed particular concern about (a) the lack of FLAGS in parts of the borough, (b) the continuing lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of ward councillors and the procedures to be followed and (c) the proposed restricted use of sandbags.

The opinion was expressed that it was unacceptable that residents should be expected to undertake all their own resilience measures as many people could not afford to do so. In response to that it was pointed out that there was funding that could be applied for in some cases, and that FLAGS would continue to play a significant role with vulnerable people in their areas.

The comment was made that there were likely to be General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) implications regarding Recommendation Two, which would need to be considered before implementation.

The view was put forward that Lancashire County Council's report on the lessons to be learned from recent flooding events was still awaited, and any recommendations to be made by the task group should only be made within the context of that report.

It was agreed, by a majority of members of the committee, that the task group's report be endorsed and sent to the Cabinet for their consideration.

32 Overview and scrutiny work programme 2018/19

Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer, confirmed that the first meeting of the Public Conveniences Task Group would be held on Tuesday 30 October at 6pm. There was still space for other councillors to join the group if they so wished.

The new national guidance on scrutiny was likely to be published before the end of 2018. Once published it was something that the committee might wish to discuss in order to see how it could affect scrutiny in Wyre.

Peter Foulsham agreed to circulate information about (i) the Centre for Public Scrutiny's Annual Conference on 4 December and (ii) a forthcoming meeting of the North West Strategic Scrutiny Network on 26 November to members of the committee.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.39 pm.

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