



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 5 December 2016 at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillor I Amos	Councillor Hodgkinson
Councillor R Amos	Councillor Jones (Chairman)
Councillor E Anderton	Councillor Ormrod
Councillor C Birch	Councillor Robinson
Councillor Fail	Councillor Matthew Vincent

Officers present:

Mark Broadhurst, Service Director Health and Wellbeing (for items 5 and 6 on the agenda)
Clare James, Head of Finance (for item 4 on the agenda)
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer

43 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ibison, Reeves, Smith and Michael Vincent.

44 Declarations of interest

None.

45 Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 7 November 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

46 Proposed Fees and Charges 2017-18

Clare James submitted a report on the proposed fees and charges for 2017/18.

Ms James summarised the background to the report which covered all the proposals and was an integral part of the budget-setting process. She reminded councillors that fees and charges could also be changed at any time during the year by way of a report by the responsible Portfolio Holder.

Ms James referred to four topics in particular.

Referring to the proposed fees and charges for the Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre Ms James advised the committee that following guidance from HMRC a couple of years ago most hires should be standard-rated for VAT which resulted in the need for an increase in fees. The council increased the fees for 2015/16 on a 50/50 basis, so that the increase was not too severe for hirers, and the proposals for 2017/18 sought to address the outstanding gap. The increases reflected what had been learned from experience (e.g. the success of the Food Markets) and from comparisons with other providers and local authorities.

Concern was expressed that the increases were quite substantial and might actually drive people away. It was suggested that if market research indicated that the proposed fees, for Thornton Little Theatre for example, were comparable with other venues, consideration might be given to undercutting our competitors. Ms James responded by saying that many of the regular hirers book from one year to the next, and all that was being done was to put the council's venues on the same footing as other similar ones. Members were reminded that lower non-commercial rates were charged to encourage use by community groups.

Ms James highlighted the introduction of some legal fees which had not previously been charged, identified as a result of recent benchmarking.

There were proposals to increase charges for bulky waste collection, the previous fees having been set in 2011. The point was made that the proposed increases, when linked to a reduction on the discount offered to the claimants of certain benefits, meant that some residents would be facing an increase in charge of just over 46%. Ms James said that residents were allowed to 'buddy up' with close neighbours to gather three items for the same collection, to ensure better value for money, although the point was made that not many people were aware of that option. Other free collection services were available by certain charities including the British Heart Foundation and Refurb.

Finally Ms James drew to the committee's attention the increased fee for the purchase of a new suite of waste recycling containers, which was often passed on to developers, and the proposed new charge of £20 for a replacement bin. Officers would be able to exercise some discretion on the application of this fee depending on the specific circumstances.

Ms James agreed to provide a written response to the questions raised by councillors and to discuss the points that had been made with the relevant portfolio holder.

RESOLVED that

- (i) answers to a number of specific questions about the proposed fees and charges for 2017/18 be provided by the Head of Finance (see Appendix) and discussed with the relevant Portfolio Holder, and
- (ii) unless specifically referred to in the Appendix, all the remaining Portfolio Holder recommendations be agreed.

47 Comparing Residential Energy Tariffs and Switching Energy Suppliers - Options for Residents

Mark Broadhurst, Service Director Health and Wellbeing, submitted a report. He explained that the council had taken a very active role in helping residents switch energy suppliers and tariffs and would continue to do so. Households commonly made savings in the region of £200 per year, with some quoted as being as high as £300.

Mr Broadhurst referred in particular to the People Power initiative, a Lancashire-wide collective energy switching scheme from 2013 in which the council played a leading role. The scheme was widely publicised and more people registered for it in Wyre than in any other local authority area in Lancashire, including a high percentage of older people. The scheme was very effective in raising awareness about switching energy supplier. In addition, 70% of those registered had never switched supplier before so even if they chose not to take up the offer under the initiative they may have turned to other switching tools (such as uSwitch.com) that were widely available instead.

Mr Broadhurst responded to a number of comments and questions from councillors.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

48 An exploration of grant funding applications by the YMCA and the Council's role

Mark Broadhurst, Service Director Health and Wellbeing, submitted a report. He explained that the council worked very closely with the YMCA and described the process that was followed when making an application for funding. In addition to a strategic approach to applications the YMCA also subscribed to the Directory of Social Change service which undertook detailed searches and identified many grants and trust funds enabling the YMCA to try to take advantage of other funding opportunities.

Councillors commented that, from their own experience, the YMCA delivered an excellent programme of activities that was very well supported by the public.

Prevention would become an increasingly important priority and there would be an added expectation that the council, the YMCA and health worked closely together. Introductory funding from Sport England had already been applied for.

Mr Broadhurst responded to a number of comments and questions from councillors.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

49 Performance - The Council's Business Plan 2016 - 17

Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Innovation, submitted a quarterly performance report on the council's Business Plan 2016/17.

It was noted that there were still delays in getting the required information from Lancashire County Council's Highways Department. The point was made that, despite the delay and continuing time constraints, it remained important that the report on the impact of the A585 was undertaken thoroughly; it was a balancing act.

The committee agreed to consider inviting an officer to attend the committee meeting in February 2017 if delays persisted.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

50 Citizens Advice Bureau Scrutiny Review - Draft Report

Councillor Julie Robinson, Chairman of the Citizens Advice Bureau Scrutiny Review Group, introduced the group's draft report.

Councillor Robinson confirmed that the recommendation was for the council's funding of Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW) to continue for a further three years until 31 May 2020. Members agreed that the service provided by CALW was very valuable and they were fully supportive of the report and recommendations.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the task group be thanked for their excellent report,
- (ii) the report be endorsed, and
- (iii) the report be sent to the Cabinet for their consideration in January 2017.

51 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2016-17

Peter Foulsham, referring to a report submitted by Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Innovation, updated the committee about the progress of the task groups on domestic violence and food hygiene respectively. It was likely that both would finish their reviews early in the New Year.

Peter Foulsham reminded members that suggestions about future task group topics should be submitted to the committee and it was likely that there would be some capacity for new task groups to commence early in 2017.

Peter Foulsham also drew members' attention to the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-22, which was the subject of a stakeholder consultation until 8 January 2017. After considering several different options the committee agreed that they would submit individual comments about the Plan to Peter Foulsham for inclusion as an item at the next meeting of the committee on 9 January 2017. A response to the consultation would be submitted as soon as was possible thereafter. Peter Foulsham requested that any submissions from members should be emailed to him by Monday 12 December 2016.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

52 Date and time of next meeting

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the committee be held at 6pm on Monday 9 January 2017 at the Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Appendix to the minutes

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.26 pm.

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**Review of Fees and Charges 2017/18 –
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review – Further Information Requested**

Subject Area	Portfolio Holders Recommendation	Comments Resulting from O&S Meeting 05.12.16	Officer Response	Management Board Response
Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre (PH report para 5.2.1)	<p>To increase the non-commercial fees at TLT by between 3% and 4% and the commercial fees by between 4% and 11%.</p> <p>To increase the non-commercial fees at Marine Hall by between 2% and 9% and the commercial fees by between 9% and 15%.</p> <p>Request for subsidy value at Marine Hall.</p>	<p>Concerned that these increases are quite substantial. How do we know that these increases in fees will not drive people away?</p> <p>If market research suggests that these proposed fees make TLT comparable with other venues, would it not be preferable to risk undercutting competitors?</p>		
	Fees for stalls at the Food Festival and the Christmas Market to remain unchanged from 2016/17 to 2017/18.	Why does there appear to be no increase?		
Legal fees (PH report para 5.5.1)	To introduce a number of fees not previously charged.	Supported by the Committee.		
Bulky Household Waste (PH report para 5.6.3)	<p>To increase the current fees of £18 for 3 items and £6 for any additional items to £19.50 and £6.50 respectively.</p> <p>A reduction of the current subsidy from a one third discount to a 10% discount for recipients of certain benefits.</p>	<p>Concern that this could lead to an increase in fly-tipping. Concern that the reduction in discount for some benefits recipients will have a disproportionate impact upon them.</p> <p>For example, someone with 3 items might currently pay £12 (with one third discount) but in 2017/18 they will pay £17.55 (with 10% discount), an increase of just over 46%.</p>		

Subject Area	Portfolio Holders Recommendation	Comments Resulting from O&S Meeting 05.12.16	Officer Response	Management Board Response
Bulky Household Waste (PH report para 5.6.3) (Continued)		<p>If we allow people to 'buddy up' to get three items together, we need to advertise this much more.</p> <p>Promote links with charities e.g. Refurb and British Heart Foundation.</p>		
Provision of Standard Suite of Recycling Containers-New Properties/Replacement Containers (PH report para 5.6.5)	<p>Increase from £47 to £56 for the admin and delivery of the full suite of containers.</p> <p>Proposal to introduce new £20 fee per replacement bin (boxes to remain free of charge).</p>	<p>Does the full suite of containers include the green bin?</p> <p>The current report refers to requiring a crime number for stolen bins. A concern was expressed that this would be onerous on the Police and this should be reworded.</p>		
Leisure Development (PH report para 5.2.3)	Proposal to increase fees for football pitch, cricket pitch and other field hire by between 5% and 15%.	The Council has identified improving the health of our communities as a corporate priority. Should we not be doing all that we can to encourage participation in sport rather than making it more costly?		

Note: Unless specifically referred to in the table above, all the remaining Portfolio Holder recommendations were agreed.