

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 5 February 2018 at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors Ian Amos, Rita Amos, Emma Anderton, Howard Ballard, Colette Birch, Rob Fail, John Hodgkinson, John Ibison, Kerry Jones, Patsy Ormrod and Christine Smith

Officers present:

Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer

Others present:

Councillor B Birch (for agenda items 1-4)

51 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ellison, Robinson and Matthew Vincent.

52 Declarations of interest

None.

53 Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 8 January 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

54 Digital Transformation Task Group - draft report

Councillor Howard Ballard, Chairman of the task group, introduced the group's report and recommendations. He confirmed that the report referred to the first phase of the implementation of a new committee management system (Modern.gov). The task group had focused specifically on the implementation of the system and its impact on councillors, with particular reference to the transition to paper-free meetings.

In response to questions from members of the committee Cllr Ballard confirmed that councillors would also be involved in the second phase of the implementation which would consider questions about the ownership of devices and the potential impact on councillors' IT allowances.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the committee note the concerns about costings and device ownership that had been raised
- (ii) the task group's report be endorsed and forwarded to the Cabinet for their consideration.

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Select Committee Report

The Chairman introduced the report of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee on the effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees, for discussion. It was noted that many of the recommendations were calls to Government, with an additional four aimed specifically at local authorities.

The committee noted that formal training for scrutiny members was something that should be further encouraged. Four members had recently attended two courses run by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the need for additional training on questioning skills was also identified.

The Chairman reminded members of the Centre for Public Scrutiny's four principles, endorsed in the Select Committee's report, which state that good scrutiny:

- Provides a constructive "critical friend" challenge;
- Amplifies the voices and concerns of the public;
- Is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role;
- Drives improvement in public services.

It was emphasized that scrutiny members should not be afraid to challenge, but always with better outcomes for residents in mind.

Councillors agreed that there were merits in carrying out pre-decision scrutiny on occasions and that the impact of scrutiny recommendations on residents should continue to be monitored.

RESOLVED

- (i) That a Government response to the Select Committee's report and consequent further direction from Government be awaited, and
- (ii) That the Select Committee's report be noted.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2017-18

The committee considered a draft scoping document for the proposed task group on the councillors' role in dealing with flooding events. The document was agreed with minor amendments. Councillors wished to stress that, although the focus of the task group would be on the councillors' role, it was also important to consider how relevant information was communicated to residents.

Taking into account the priorities included in the 2018 update of the council's Business Plan, members made the following comments about other topics that had been identified for their consideration for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2018/19:

Car parking – a report to be brought to the committee as soon as possible, following the completion of analysis and a report on the recent public consultation;

Digital Transformation Plan – an update report to be submitted to the committee within the next six months (it was noted that a report had been received by the committee in July 2017);

Maximising the return from our assets – report to the committee previously requested for April 2017;

Supporting a sustainable future for the fish processing industry – a report to the committee would be requested once the Business Plan project brief had been completed, with a view to setting up a task group thereafter;

Environmental crime – a task group to be convened to consider options for enforcement and the members' role

RESOLVED that

- (i) The draft scoping document for a task group on the councillors' role in dealing with flooding events be agreed, with minor amendments,
- (ii) A task group on the councillors' role in dealing with flooding events be convened,

Plans for other elements of the O&S Work Programme for 2018/19 (as detailed) be progressed

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 6.56 pm.