

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 3 June 2019 in committee room 2 Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

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### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:**

Councillors Ibison, Matthew Vincent, I Amos, R Amos, Ballard, Collinson, Cropper, E Ellison, Fail, Leech, Longton, Minto and O'Neill

### **Apologies for absence:**

None.

### **Other councillors present:**

Councillors Lynne Bowen, Lady Dulcie Atkins and Sir Robert Atkins

### **Officers present:**

Clare James, Head of Finance  
Julia Robinson, Commercial Manager  
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer  
Emma Keany, Governance Trainee

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

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### **1 Election of Chairman for 2019/20**

Councillor Ibison was elected as Chairman of the committee for the 2019/20 municipal year.

### **2 Election of Vice Chairman for 2019/20**

Councillor Matthew Vincent was elected as Vice Chairman of the committee for the 2019/20 municipal year.

### **3 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Leach declared a personal interest in Item 6 (Wyre Theatres – update report) as he hired the Thornton Little Theatre each week.

### **4 Confirmation of minutes**

**It was agreed** that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 18 March 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

## Wyre theatres - update report

The Service Director Performance and Innovation, Marianne Hesketh submitted a report, which was introduced by the Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder, Councillor Lynne Bowen and the Commercial Manager, Julia Robinson.

Councillor Bowen confirmed that both theatres, the Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre, were operating to a very high standard. The subsidy had been reduced by nearly £100,000 in the past twelve months and it was anticipated that income would increase this year. Two key posts had been filled in recently months, which had had a very positive impact on the customer experience.

Councillors made comments and asked a number of questions, in response to which Councillor Bowen and Julia Robinson made the following observations:

- Options for a seafood restaurant at the Marine Hall were being explored, although discussions were at an early stage. Siting the restaurant on the top of the parapet, which would provide panoramic views, was one option that could be considered.
- There was some potential in opening up the seaward side of the Marine Hall.
- Any such projects would need to be costed and visual projections produced before ideas could be advanced.
- The number of weddings held at the Marine Hall was increasing; providing more service points at such events, staggering demand and providing a pop-up 'gin and fizz' bar had improved the customer experience.
- The Marine Hall was working much more closely with community events including, for example, the Fleetwood Christmas Lights Switch-On.
- A different approach to building the programme of events had been taken, with less tribute acts and more nationally recognised performers being booked. More box-office splits had been negotiated with promoters, which had been financially advantageous as well as ensuring that promoters had an interest in increasing ticket sales.
- It was important to take steps that would maintain and improve the venues' reputations.

Julia Robinson confirmed that her three immediate aims were to

- (i) control expenditure and bring the subsidy down below £200,000,
- (ii) boost income, and
- (iii) develop a long-term vision, subject to funding and investment.

Councillor Bowen stated that, in her opinion, it was too early for the committee to consider setting up a task group on any aspect of the venues' performance.

**It was agreed** that a further update report on Wyre's theatres be requested in

twelve months' time (June 2020).

The Chairman thanked Councillor Bowen and Julia Robinson for their positive contribution to the meeting.

## **6 Budget consultation**

The Head of Finance, Clare James, made a proposal regarding the possibility of councillor involvement in a consultation about budget priorities. She spoke of the statutory requirement to hold consultations and the benefits they brought to both the public and the council.

Clare James highlighted the results of a question on the Life in Wyre survey 2018 in which there had been a slight decrease in the percentage of individuals agreeing that "53p a day for the services carried out by Wyre Council was value for money". In the 2018 survey 51% of people agreed with the question, whereas in 2016 55% agreed.

Clare James also spoke to the committee regarding the council's desire to look at alternative ways to hold a consultation about the budget. An example of a recent soft consultation was highlighted. The Head of Finance described how the consultation was carried out on the Council's website and invited residents to comment on the budget proposal for 2019/20. The consultation received four responses from the general public and included one response that referred to the services provided by the County Council. It was emphasised that consultations may be able to be used to better promote the services provided by the council. Examples of how other authorities consult with the public were also presented to the committee.

A decision about any consultation would need to be made by October 2019. The committee questioned the desired outcomes and the cost implications of any consultations. The Head of Finance confirmed that she would like to see an increase in public satisfaction with council services, the best use of available resources and costs kept to a minimum.

Questions were asked regarding the possibility of a joint consultation with the County Council and a discussion took place about the viability of such a task and the appetite of the County Council for this.

A question about New Homes Bonus and the need to consult with the public, was raised. Clare James stated that there was no statutory requirement to consult regarding the spending of the New Homes Bonus.

**It was agreed** that the Head of Finance would submit a proposal to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019.

## **7 Business Plan 2018/19 - Quarterly performance statement**

The Service Director Performance and Innovation submitted a report, the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Performance Statement 2019/19, January – March 2019.

The committee commented on several issues and noted, in particular, that the pilot project on environmental crime and community pride was something that was impacting on many residents. Councillors expressed interest in receiving a report about the pilot towards the end of its twelve-month duration in order to review performance and have an opportunity to comment about how the lessons learned might be taken forward. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to discuss the matter with the Street Scene Manager to identify a suitable date for a report to be submitted to the committee.

Comment was made that the quarterly performance reports always included commentary about the measures, but for those that are red (“worsening”) there was nothing reported about any corrective action that would be taken, and members would find that helpful.

#### **It was agreed**

- (i) That a report on the environmental crime pilot project be requested, to be scheduled in a timely fashion towards the end of the pilot period;
- (ii) That a request be made of the Service Director Performance and Innovation to include comments about corrective action that was planned regarding ‘red’ measures that were “worsening” in any future quarterly reports;
- (iii) That the report be noted.

### **8 Public conveniences task group - draft report**

The Chairman of the Public Conveniences task group, Councillor Emma Ellison, presented the group’s draft report and recommendations. The Chairman spoke highly of the current provider, DANFO, and praised their enthusiasm and professionalism.

Some concern was expressed about the recommendation to withdraw the use of radar keys (Recommendation 4). Councillor Ellison confirmed that the task group had discussed this with local groups and had concluded that as radar keys were very widely available and had led to the current system to be abused, the solution was simply to withdraw their use.

The committee made the suggestion, which was supported by the task group Chairman, that Recommendation 8 be amended to include the exploration of providing an additional toilet facility between Café Cove at Cleveleys and Rossall Point.

#### **It was agreed**

- (i) That Recommendation 8 be amended to include the exploration of providing an additional toilet facility between Café Cove at Cleveleys and Rossall Point, and
- (ii) That the draft report be endorsed by the committee (by a majority, with

two abstentions) and submitted to the Cabinet.

## **9 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20 - update and planning**

Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer, introduced a report that had been submitted by the Service Director Performance and Innovation.

Following discussion, it was agreed to convene a task group on Transport Connectivity across the Fylde Coast, to develop the work carried out in April by a group that focused for its one meeting on the Poulton to Fleetwood rail link. Membership to the group would be opened up again bearing in mind that eighteen new councillors were elected to the Council on 2 May 2019. Several amendments to the draft scoping document were agreed.

The committee discussed a draft scoping document for a task group review of the Resident Car Parking Permit Scheme. It was agreed that the review would need to be cognisant of the council's wider car parking policy and pricing.

Councillors expressed interest in receiving a report about the environmental enforcement pilot project, run by District Enforcement, which had been previously considered under Item 8 of the agenda, towards the end of its twelve-month duration. The purpose of the report would be to review the pilot project and provide an opportunity for comment about how the lessons learned might be taken forward. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to discuss the matter with the Street Scene Manager to identify a suitable date for a report to be submitted to the committee.

Governance Trainee, Emma Keany, reported on a short research project that she had carried out, about the way in which other local authorities (Districts in particular) identified actions that they could take to reduce the council's carbon footprint. She drew the work of Ryedale Council to the committee's attention and reminded members that climate change had been included in the Business Plan 2019-2023.

Peter Foulsham confirmed that the long-awaited Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local Authorities and Combined Authorities was published on 7 May 2019. There was an expectation that the Guidance be considered by all councils, although all decisions about implementation were left to local discretion. A summary of the Guidance would be sent to all councillors and would be an agenda item at a future meeting of the committee. It was further noted that the Guidance might have training and development implications for committee members, and possibly other councillors and officers, depending on how it was to be interpreted locally.

The roll-out of tablets to councillors had started. It was intended that members be suitably equipped and trained for the introduction of paper-less meetings by early July. It was noted that one or two teething problems had been identified but these would be sorted out ready for full implementation as soon as possible.

Reference was made to the review of the Council's constitution that was

nearing completion. Councillors discussed whether it would be appropriate for the committee to consider the recommended changes before a report was submitted to Full Council.

**It was agreed**

- (i) That the draft scoping document for a task group on Transport Connectivity across the Fylde Coast be approved, subject to some minor amendments;
- (ii) That a task group be set up on Transport Connectivity across the Fylde Coast;
- (iii) That a task group be set up to review the Resident Car Parking Permit Scheme;
- (iv) That a report on the District Enforcement environmental crime pilot project be requested in a timely fashion towards the end of the pilot period;
- (v) That a task group on climate change be included in the committee's work programme, to be commenced later during 2019/20;
- (vi) That a summary of the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local Authorities and Combined Authorities be circulated to all councillors
- (vii) That the committee would request the opportunity to consider and comment on the proposed changes to the Council's constitution, subject to the views of the Corporate Management Team and the Executive.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.42 pm.

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