

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors Ibison, Collinson, Cropper, Fail, Leech, Longton, Minto and O'Neill.

Apologies for absence:

Councillors Matthew Vincent, I Amos, R Amos, Ballard, C Birch and E Ellison

Other councillors present:

None.

Officers present:

Neil Greenwood, Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety

Emma Keany, Democratic Services Officer

Clare James, Corporate Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

Roy Saunders, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager.

Chief Inspector Chris Hardy and Inspector Richard Hurt, Lancashire Constabulary were present for the item on Community Policing.

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

30 Declarations of interest

None.

31 Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 October 2019 were confirmed as a correct record.

32 Neighbourhood policing

Chief Inspector Chris Hardy submitted a briefing paper providing an overview of the policing arrangements in Fylde and Wyre.

Two questions had been submitted to Chief Inspector Hardy prior to the

meeting, to which he had responded as follows:

Q1 Would you please bring the hot-spot map to the meeting? Members have expressed interest in seeing and understanding this.

Ans. *“I will bring the hotspot map they are informative to an extent but often anything more than a handful of crimes appears as one big mark – I will still bring them.”*

Q2. We understand that 156 new police officers are being proposed for Lancashire by the Government. How many of those will be in Wyre?

Ans, *“The uplift and what this looks like is still a work in progress with a team working on this. All areas, NHP, Rural policing response etc will be looking for an uplift but it is far too early to start assigning numbers. All areas though should see an increase.”*

Chief Inspector Hardy said that he was pleased to have been able to attend this meeting, but he informed members that he was due to start a new role as Chief Inspector for the Lancaster and Morecombe area the following day. He said that the new Chief Inspector for the Fylde and Wyre area was Marie Howarth.

He explained the structure of the new neighbourhood policing arrangements and the restructuring of policing teams, as set out in his briefing paper.

Chief Inspector Hardy and Inspector Hurt also responded to questions from members of the Committee on various policing issues, as follows:

- With regard to additional resources, 153 more officers had been allocated for Lancashire, but it was not yet known where they would be posted to.
- Rural crime had been a significant issue locally, including organised criminals coming to the area from other parts of the country. Tackling such crime was much more difficult and resource intensive than the localised, more opportunistic burglaries that had previously been the norm in rural areas. All officers based in Fleetwood and Gartsang received training on rural crime issues. The need to gain the confidence of farmers and rural communities was recognised and plans were being made for a neighbourhood watch scheme for farmers.
- The national decision making model in place for prioritising calls to the police and allocating resources to respond, based on the assessed level of threat, risk and harm, was explained.
- Late night policing arrangements in Poulton were explained and initiatives undertaken with Licensees were referred to. It was confirmed that there was a good working relationship in place between the Police and the Council's Licensing Team.

- Multi-agency arrangements for dealing with anti-social behaviour were discussed and assurances were given that measures were being taken to ensure that meetings were held regularly and that there were good communication channels in place.
- A new very well respected third sector project called “The Boathouse” was due to open in premises off Broadway in Fleetwood soon, which would be a very positive initiative providing activities and support for young people in the area.

Chief Inspector Hardy said that, although he was moving on, when the new policing arrangements were fully in place and it was known where the promised additional officers were to be deployed, the Council would be informed.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Hardy and Inspector Hurt for attending and for their frank and comprehensive comments.

33 Review of fees and charges 2020/21

The Corporate Director Resources, Clare James, submitted a report on proposed fees and charges for the 2020/21 financial year. She said that although fees and charges could be amended at any time, proposals for the coming year had now been consolidated in this report to fit in with the budget cycle. This was a fairly ‘quiet’ report with few material or significant changes proposed.

The Committee discussed the fees and charges relating to car parking, disposal of bulky items of domestic refuse and development control fees, but no changes were proposed.

Members also discussed pitch hire costs. Whilst no changes were proposed, Ms James said that she would feed back to relevant officers the view that when pitch hire costs were next reviewed the level of use of pitches should be taken in to account, rather than just a benchmarking review of hire costs for other pitches in the Fylde coast area.

The proposed increase in the fees payable by homeowners or developers for the standard suite waste recycling containers including green bins from £66 to £92 (as set out in paragraph 5.5.5 of the report) was considered. Ms James explained that the increase reflected the increased cost of provision resulting from the replacement of the box for a new wheeled bin and that it was still lower than the charges made by Fylde Council, but would still not recover the full costs incurred by the council. A proposal to recommend to the Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder that the amount of the proposed increase should be reduced was not supported (by 5 votes to 4, including a casting vote of the Chairman). Ms James said that she would find out if it would be possible for a planning condition to be imposed requiring developers to purchase a suite of bins for new build developments.

(It has subsequently been confirmed that this is not possible)

It was **agreed** that the report be noted and that no changes to the fees and charges set out in the report be recommended to the Cabinet.

34 Cost profiles - benchmarking results

The Corporate Director Resources (Clare James) submitted a report on the key findings of the 2019/20 benchmarking study, which had been considered by the Cabinet on 16 October 2019. She said that these annual reports helped to show value for money by comparing costs incurred by similar authorities, although caution was needed when interpreting the results because there were so many different variables in the way services were provided and accounted for.

There had been very little increase in expenditure per head (shown in paragraph 5.6 of the report) partly because of the increase in the population of the Borough. There had also been a reduction in cost per head of Planning and Development Services because, following the adoption of the Local Plan, lower costs had been incurred on consultants. There had also been an increase in the statutory fees and charges relating to planning in 2018, which had resulted in increased income.

With regard to the issues identified in the 'looking ahead' section of the summary (in paragraph 5.14 of the report):

- The comparatively high cost of Wyre's leisure and culture related services was well known, but reducing costs was challenging. Also, the services now provided by private leisure centres were very competitive and it currently seemed very unlikely that the YMCA subsidy target for 2019/20 would be achieved. Discussions were currently taking place with YMCA about ways of increasing income and reducing costs.
- Residents Parking Permits were currently cheap and open-ended, but this was a scheme covered in the earlier Fees and Charges report.
- When costs of homelessness were shown as an amount per homeless household costs were very high, but there were very few rough sleepers in Wyre and the bulk of the council's efforts were focussed on preventing homelessness. When the denominator was changed to reflect those at risk of becoming homeless, Wyre's costs were more in line with the norm. The council's obligations had also recently increased as a consequence of new legislation. This was therefore an area of activity which it would be timely to review.

Ms James said, in response to a question, that efforts were made to publicise the Local Council Tax Scheme and the proposed introduction of a citizen's access portal would enable such schemes to be targeted more effectively to potential recipients.

It was **agreed** that the report be noted.

Business Plan 2019/20 - Quarterly performance statement

The Service Director Performance and Innovation, Marianne Hesketh submitted a report on the 2nd Quarter Performance Statement for the period July to September 2019.

Comments were made by members of the Committee on:

- The lower number of “measures” included in the Quarter 2 report than had been shown in the Quarter 1 report and the changes to some measures which, it was suggested, made an assessment of progress between quarters difficult.
- The apparent inconsistency between the red and amber measures in the report and the green categorisation of progress on the project to which those measures referred.
- Notwithstanding the explanatory comments in the covering report and the assurances given by both Chief Inspector Hardy and the Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety earlier in this meeting about the effectiveness of the Multi-Agency approach to anti-social behaviour, the measure relating to the number of cases going to the multi-agency ASB meetings was one which the Committee should continue to monitor closely.

The Chairman said that a report on the proposed update of the Business Plan for 2020/21 was due to be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

It was **agreed** that the report be noted and the Marianne Hesketh be asked to attend the next meeting of Committee, to explain more fully how the categorisation of the indicative “measures” included in the quarterly reports related to the overall progress on the “projects” listed in the Business Plan.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20 - update report

The Service Director Performance and Innovation had submitted a report, updating the Committee about the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20.

Emma Keany said that she planned to send out an email on arrangements for the survey proposed by the District Environmental Enforcement Task Group

Agreed that the current position on the Poulton-Fleetwood Link Task Group, the Residents Car Parking Permit Scheme Task Group and the District Environmental Enforcement Task Group and other planned work, as set out in the report, be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.52 pm.

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