



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 16 October 2023 at the Committee Room 2 - Civic Centre.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors Cartridge, Baxter, Amos, Beavers, Blair, Bolton, Collinson, Fail, Higgs and Martin

Absent- apologies received:

Councillors Sir R Atkins and A Walker

Absent- apologies not received

None.

Other councillors present:

Councillor Vincent

Officers present:

Daphne Courtenage, Democratic Services Officer
Rebecca Huddleston, Chief Executive

Officers absent- apologies received:

None.

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

22 Declarations of interest

None.

23 Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 September 2023 were **confirmed** as a correct record by those who were in attendance.

24 Draft Council Plan Priorities

The Chief Executive, Rebecca Huddleston, had submitted a report to provide the committee with an overview of the development of the Council Plan and

sought feedback on the proposed changes to the Council's priorities and commitments.

The Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Michael Vincent, were both in attendance at this meeting to respond to comments and questions from members.

The Chief Executive introduced the item. She explained to members that the Business Plan had last been refreshed in March 2023; however, with all-out elections in May 2023, a more significant refresh was required following the elections. She said that members of the committee were being involved in an earlier stage of the refresh, and that members of staff were still working through the process as set out in the report. She expected the refresh of the plan to be complete, and for it to be submitted to council, in November 2023.

She explained to members the process of the refresh up until that point. She highlighted to members that the plan would now be referred to as the Council Plan. She also mentioned the new proposal of developing measures to track progress against medium term priorities and commitments.

Members agreed with the proposed changes to the name of the Council Plan as well as tracking measures against commitments and not just projects. They were pleased that they would still receive quarterly updates on this.

Members raised the following additional comments/queries:

- Increasing level of economic deprivation in the borough and what potential measures could be taken to address this
- The need for a Tourism Strategy to improve town centres
- Members praised the work of Mark Billington and Mark Broadhurst in the local communities
- A separate council plan with more long-term goals, such as a ten year plan
- A focus on big infrastructure issues
- The reasoning behind the new fourth council priority of "dynamic and customer focussed"
- Wording of point five of "Growth and Prosperity"
- Questions were raised over the projects being removed from the plan

The Leader of the Council responded to comments and questions raised by members. He explained that many of the points they raised related to issues outside of the control of the council. He would take back comments raised by members but that there was only so much as a district council that Wyre could promise to do.

He emphasised that many of the issues experienced in the borough were outside of the council's control, such as the failed bid for the Strategic Town Centre Regeneration Framework. Big infrastructure projects, such as the railway line from Poulton to Fleetwood, was not in their decision to make and would also require external funding. He stressed the need for an achievable plan, and as discussions on a County Deal were ongoing, strengthened relationships with neighbouring authorities.

He agreed that a statement setting out the long term aspirations for the borough needed a place, but did not believe the Council Plan was the appropriate place for this.

In regards to the additional council priority, he explained that this placed a focus on technology and efficiency, an in particular a council website that worked for residents.

In response to questions raised over the projects to be removed from the plan, members requested information on the ongoing work on the Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone and the Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) initiative. It was agreed that quarterly updates on CHiL would be requested from Mark Broadhurst to monitor the eligibility requirements of the scheme.

Following discussion, members noted the overview of the Council Plan development process. The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and the Leader for their work and their attendance at the meeting.

25 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 – update report

The Corporate Director Resources (S151 Officer), Clare James, submitted a report updating members on the progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24.

Daphne Courtenage, Democratic Services Officer (DSO) introduced the report.

She drew members' attention to recommendations 2.2 and 2.3 of the report. She explained to members that the contract between the council and Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW) was up for renewal before May 2024; historically, a task group had been used to review the service level agreement and because of the timescale, this review would have to happen at some point soon. A draft scoping document for the task group had been attached at Appendix 2 of the report within the agenda pack.

She recommended that as the review topic was more simple than past topics, it would be a good opportunity for new councillors to get an understanding of how task groups worked. Additionally, as other potential review topics were still in progress, it would be an opportune time to commission this task group and get the process started while they were waiting for more information on other topics.

Members approved the recommendation at 2.2 of the report and agreed to commission the Citizens Advice Lancashire West task group.

The DSO also drew members' attention to recommendation 2.3, which asked the committee to consider their training needs. She informed members that an external review undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in early 2021, and following workshops with officers and the previous scrutiny committee, an action plan of points detailing areas of improvement had been created. The action plan had been attached at Appendix 3 of the report.

She told members that many of the points raised in the action plan had been raised since 2021 and that they had improved on many of the points. In general terms, the committee were asked to consider their own training needs as both scrutiny members as well as ambassadors of good governance across the council.

Members raised questions over capacity for additional task groups.

Councillor Beavers raised the suggestion of a review topic on Fleetwood Market. She explained that stallholders were experiencing increased VAT rates, business rates and had been impacted by the market improvement works, and stallholders were having to leave the market. Councillor Collinson agreed that similar problems were experienced in Garstang.

Councillors agreed that more information was needed on the business plan for the market and to monitor the number of stallholders and the impact recent development have had on these numbers.

Members also discussed potentially having pre-meetings before big issue meetings, and agreed to trial this going forward. They also asked the DSO to continue to look for relevant training opportunities for scrutiny members.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 6.58 pm.

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