



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 20 November 2023 at the Committee Room 2 - Civic Centre.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors Cartridge, Baxter, Amos, Sir R Atkins, Bolton, Collinson, Fail, Higgs, Martin and A Walker

Absent- apologies received:

Councillors Beavers and Blair

Absent- apologies not received

None.

Other councillors present:

None.

Officers present:

Clare James, Corporate Director Resources and Section 151 Officer
Penny Jones, Corporate Accountant
Daphne Courtenage, Democratic Services Officer

Officers absent- apologies received:

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

26 Declarations of interest

None.

27 Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 October 2023 were **confirmed** as a correct record by those who were in attendance.

28 Fees and Charges - draft

The Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor Lesley McKay, and the Corporate

Director Resources (S151 Officer) submitted a report for the proposed fee and charges (draft) for the 2023/24 financial year.

The Corporate Director Resources (S151 Officer) and the Corporate Accountant attended the meeting to respond to comments and questions from members.

The Corporate Director explained to members that the draft fees and charges report is a consolidated report including changes from Portfolio Holders that is brought once a year to incorporate any changes into the budget setting process. Fees and charges were reactive, and portfolio holder reports could be brought at any time during the year, however they tried to consolidate this in one update.

She told members that all the fees and charges set out within the report would be effective from 1 April 2024. Sometimes changes would be effective from alternative times, however this was not the case for this update.

Highlighting paragraph 4.5 of the report, the Corporate Director explained that a number of fees and charges had been uplifted per consumer price inflation (CPI), which at September 2023 was 6.7%. This was common practice, to keep pace with inflation. However, this was not a blanket approach for all the fees and charges.

In response to a question on the review process of the report, the Corporate Director explained that feedback and comments from this meeting would be fed back to the portfolio holders and a determination would be made on any proposed changes prior to the report being published.

In response to a question on the rate of inflation used, the Corporate Director explained that using the September figure and not a more up to date one was the traditional approach and was the same used by government.

The following paragraphs of the report were raised to members:

- 5.1.1 Pest control
- 5.1.7 and 5.1.8 Thornton Little Theatre, Marine Hall and Mount Pavilion
- 5.1.9 Cemeteries
- 5.2.2 Housing
- 5.3.1 Development Control
- 5.3.3 Markets
- 5.4.3 Room hire (Civic Centre)
- 5.5.3 Waste Management
- 5.5.5 Leisure Development – Playing fields

Members raised questions on the paragraphs highlighted and additional paragraphs not raised. These included:

5.1.1

- Questions over the benchmarking exercise and whether this was in line

with other LAs

- Whether the council was subsidising this service because prices were too competitive
- One councillor asked that it be cascaded to officers to keep to scheduled appointments

5.1.5 (private water supply)

- Does the council have a private water supply, what is the relation to this proposed fee

5.1.9

- Whether there were extra charges for those being buried from outside the borough
- Whether members of the public were willing to pay the £100 15 year lease fee and were any issues envisaged with this

5.3.3

- At the last meeting of the committee, a review topic was suggested to focus on Fleetwood Markets; how would this fit in with the fundamental review planned on this
- Requested an explanation for the VAT increases
- Members agreed for an evaluation on how the decarbonisation improvements would impact on the market
- What impact would there be on additional revenue from fee increases for Market House studios

- Any connections/lessons learnt from Morecambe with regeneration through art
- Justification of increases in winter prices of market stalls
- Need more context for price increases generally – to ensure a percentage column is included and previous data on price increases to be included

5.4.3

- Has the demand for room hire at the Civic Centre justified the fee increases

5.5.3

- Concerns over increases in fly-tipping with increases in charges
- Need to monitor fly tipping following this increase – to be suggested when the project on this commences

The Corporate Director responded to the questions raised by members.

- 5.1.1 – The council ought to be benchmarking against other local authorities as well as private providers, some might offer services cheaper. A review was needed to ensure prices were correct.
- 5.1.5 – the Environmental Health team at the council offered a service to test private water supplies
- 5.1.9 – it was confirmed that those living outside the borough would be

charged more; the Corporate Director said she would raise the question over concerns over the 15 year lease

- 5.3.3 – a review of the market, its business management and in particular rental prices was needed and had been planned for the new year, a potential task group on this topic could coincide with this. In terms of the VAT increases, this had been identified through an external review and traders had been given a six month notice period of this, with payments starting in October 2023. The council had paid off the historic VAT payments. It would take around 12 months to review the impact of the improvements from the decarbonisation project but hoped the revamped market would be attractive to traders. Updates had been brought to the proposed fees and charges for Market House studios, any impact on additional revenue would be sought from officers and connections to Abingdon Street Market were being investigated. In terms of increasing the winter prices of the stalls, the justification was to bring these more in line with summer prices. The Corporate Director agreed to the suggestion for a column showing percentage increases as well as a column giving context to the last time a fee had been increased.
- 5.4.3 – the redecoration of the committee rooms and Members Lounge had made a difference, with wedding bookings already increased. More time was needed to review this impact.
- 5.5.3 – The Corporate Director acknowledged that BHW fees are sometimes linked to fly-tipping but no causal link has been established. The type of waste fly-tipped is not normally BHW that the paid for service would collect, they are very different in nature. The Corporate Director and members acknowledged that people not willing to pay the fee would not stop fly-tipping even if it was decreased.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director Resources and Corporate Accountant for their attendance at the meeting.

29 NWE Strategic Scrutiny Network Financial Scrutiny session - review

Members of the committee had been supplied with the minutes and presentation slides of the last meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Network, run by North West Employers. A link to the recording of the meeting had also been included in the agenda pack.

The Corporate Director Resources (S151 Officer) explained to members that she had been asked by the network to give a presentation on finance and scrutiny. She encouraged members to review these and to attend future sessions.

30 Business Plan 2023/24, Quarterly Performance Statement (Quarter 2: July - September)

The Corporate Director Communities had submitted the Council Business Plan 2nd Quarter Performance Statement 2023/24 update report.

The Corporate Director Resources introduced the item to members.

Councillor Fail raised a question regarding the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone and its job targets. He raised concerns over potential changes to these targets, and questioned whether these had changed from the original job targets set out in its masterplan.

It was agreed with officers that an update on this would be circulated via email.

Members thanked the Corporate Director Resources for her attendance at that meeting.

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

The Corporate Director Resources had submitted an update report on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme.

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report.

She highlighted to members paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.

She informed members that the Citizens Advice Lancashire West task group had had its first meeting, and its next meeting was scheduled for the 14 December.

She explained to members that following further requests for information on the council's leisure provision and the draft strategies relating to this, officers required more time to review the draft documents. However, it had been suggested that the committee could start discussions on a potential review of the YMCA contract agreement.

She also reminded members that as part of the work programme, they were to invite the representative for the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board to their January 2024 meeting. She asked that members discuss potential questions they would like to bring to the meeting and agree a method of reviewing these.

Members discussed current priorities for review topics, including those that had been raised at previous meetings. It was agreed that the current priority was Fleetwood Market, and members requested the DSO to begin discussions with officers and to bring information on the current situation to a future meeting.

The previously discussed topics of housing options and the YMCA contract review would be included in the work programme workshop in February 2024.

Members agreed to review the questions previously put to the ICB representative and to submit questions to the DSO via email. These would then be reviewed and agreed by the committee via email prior to their next meeting.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 6.50 pm.

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