



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 7 January 2019 in committee room 2 Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:

Councillors Ibison, I Amos, R Amos, Ballard, C Birch, Ellison, Fail, Gibson, Hodgkinson, Ormrod, Robinson, Shewan and Matthew Vincent

Apologies for absence:

Councillor E Stephenson

Other councillors present:

Councillor David Henderson, Leader of the Council

Officers present:

Garry Payne, Chief Executive
Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Innovation
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

40 Election of Vice Chairman

Councillor Matthew Vincent was elected as Vice Chairman of the committee for the remainder of the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

41 Declarations of interest

None.

42 Confirmation of minutes

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 26 November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

43 Draft Business Plan 2019-2023

The Leader of the Council (Councillor David Henderson), the Chief Executive (Garry Payne) and the Service Director Performance and Innovation (Marianne Hesketh) attended to present a report on the Draft Business Plan

2019-2023 and to answer questions from the committee.

Councillor Henderson said that the four-year Draft Business Plan had been prepared to coincide with the four-year election cycle. The Draft Plan comprised only items that it was possible for the council to influence.

Members of the committee commented on the Draft Plan and asked a number of questions.

The Chief Executive agreed that, in relation to collaboration with our partners to improve transport infrastructure, it would be helpful to be more specific about who those partners would be (Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Transport, for example).

Councillor Henderson confirmed that the Cabinet and Management Board had played a substantial part in the preparation of the Draft Plan, Management Board having considered it on several occasions.

Garry Payne confirmed that the regeneration team would develop an Economic Development Strategy and would also bring forward the plan for the Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone. Further development of the vision for an Energy Coast would depend upon what opportunities arose.

In response to a question, Marianne Hesketh detailed a number of technological improvements that were either on-going or imminent, including the Citizens Access Portal, a new payment system to facilitate payments to the council by residents, Modern.gov committee management system and Office 365.

A question was posed about the scope for flexibility in business rates to encourage new start-ups. Marianne Hesketh informed members that advice from the Government on this issue was expected soon.

The point was made that climate change was not explicitly referred to in the Draft Business Plan and, it was suggested, it should be considered in relation to all parts of the Plan as a general principle. Councillor Henderson agreed with the point made, and said that it would be reflected.

A view was put forward that one of the ways by which the council should measure the ambition to have a strong local economy would be to monitor employment levels in the borough. Garry Payne said that such information was not readily or regularly available on a borough-wide basis, but job numbers and growth would be captured in the Hillhouse Implementation Plan.

A comment was made that the council did not measure open space provision, and so would not be prompted to take action if the level of open space available needed addressing. Garry Payne responded by saying that open space was dealt with in the Local Plan, but it was not the role or responsibility of the Local Plan to sort out something that was historically deficient.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Henderson, Garry Payne and Marianne

Hesketh for attending the meeting, presenting the Draft Business Plan 2019-2023 and for responding to questions and comments from the committee.

It was agreed that the comments made by members of the committee would be taken into account before a final version of the Business Plan 2019-2023 was submitted to Full Council for their consideration in March.

44 Digital transformation - update report

The Service Director Performance and Innovation, Marianne Hesketh, presented a report.

The Digital Transformation Task Group had made a number of recommendations, the progress on each of which was detailed in the report.

A trial of tablet devices (IPad and Samsung Galaxy) had been completed by four councillors and the feedback had, on the whole, been positive. Android tablets were the preferred option, in that they did all that would be required to facilitate councillors undertaking their roles, and they were significantly cheaper than similar iPads. There would be a phased roll-out after the elections in May. The comment was made that it had been agreed previously that the task group would be reconvened to evaluate any trial that had taken place, before implementation.

The Independent Remuneration Panel, after having considered the implications of the provision of personal devices to all councillors, would report to the Full Council on 17 January 2019 and recommend that the councillors' IT allowance be withdrawn from 2 May 2019. The Chief Executive would, in exceptional circumstances, be authorised to agree to make a payment to a councillor experiencing financial hardship to obtain internet access at home.

Each device would have Outlook, a calendar, Modern.gov and possibly other applications that would be of use to councillors.

It was hoped that officers would become 'paperless' in time, but funding was not currently available for devices for all officers.

Concern was expressed that the trial had only included four of fifty councillors. There were also other issues that had not been fully resolved, including viewing more than one screen at a time, the ability to save (and possibly print) personally annotated documents or agendas and the lack of a full impact assessment. It was suggested that the councillors' IT allowance not be removed until such time as a longer trial with more members had taken place and been evaluated.

The Chairman thanked Marianne Hesketh for her report and for presenting it to the committee.

It was agreed

- (i) that the Digital Transformation Task Group not be reconvened.
- (ii) that the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel, in respect of the councillors' IT allowance, be supported.

45 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme - update report

Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer, gave a verbal update about the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2018/19 and the draft Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20.

Councillor Emma Ellison fed back to the committee following her attendance at the Centre for Public Scrutiny's Annual Conference which was held in December. She said it was a very valuable event, which she found very beneficial, and she highlighted four key messages that had been expounded throughout the day:

- (i) The importance of being proactive in scrutiny, rather than scrutinising issues after the event.
- (ii) The value of considering reports about complaints, including reports by the Ombudsman, when identifying topics for further investigation.
- (iii) The importance of engaging the public in scrutiny.
- (iv) The value of engaging more closely with the Executive.

Reference was made to the State of Wyre report, recently circulated to members, which could be used positively for identifying subjects that might benefit from some degree of investigation by scrutiny. The comment was made that health issues were often discussed but health outcomes were not always considered.

It was also suggested that the committee should involve Portfolio Holders more frequently when monitoring the Business Plan Quarterly Performance reports.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.18 pm.

Date of Publication: 9 January 2019