



## Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Monday, 21 October 2019 in committee room 2 Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

---

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee members present:**

Councillors Ibison, Matthew Vincent, I Amos, R Amos, Collinson, Cropper, E Ellison, Fail, Leech and Longton

**Apologies for absence:**

Councillors Ballard, C Birch and O'Neill

**Officers present:**

David McArthur, Housing Services Manager  
Pamela Holroyd, Housing Options Team Leader  
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer  
Emma Keany, Governance Trainee

No members of the public or press attended the meeting.

---

**25        Declarations of interest**

None.

**26        Confirmation of minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 September 2019 and 23 September 2019 respectively were agreed as a true record.

**27        MyHomeChoice - review task group recommendations**

The Housing Services Manager, David McArthur, submitted a report. He attended the meeting with Pamela Holroyd, Housing Options Team Leader.

The MyHomeChoice Task Group had reported to the Cabinet on 5 September 2018, supporting the proposed changes to the arrangements for the allocation and letting of social housing in Wyre. Mr McArthur informed the committee that his report was intended to bring them up to date with the progress made in the past twelve months.

Mr McArthur described the essential elements of the MyHomeChoice system, which made it easier for applicants to register and bid for housing. The new system was more user-friendly and less time-consuming, delays getting people onto the system having been reduced. Registration only required a small amount of information to be provided, the more detailed information only being needed at a point much closer to a definite allocation.

The local connection criteria had been revised but it remained a priority for an allocation in Wyre. Half of allocations were to people with a defined housing need and the number of people opting to transfer for no real reason had been reduced. Overall, the number on the waiting list had reduced slightly, partly because the list had been cleansed of applicants who has been on it but remained dormant for a lengthy period. There had been a significant increase in the number of applicants already in employment.

In response to questions asked by members of the committee, David McArthur and Pamela Holroyd made the following points:

- It was difficult to give indications of the average or maximum waiting times as some people had been on the list for a long time. For illustrative purposes only, the average time for an allocation of a Band A property in Fleetwood, for example, might be 2-3 months.
- There were several stages involved in the appropriate allocation of a property to an applicant with a specific disability
- The priority being given to people who work was not having an adverse impact on people with a disability of older people
- It was difficult to make provision of affordable housing in the places where it was most needed. Large rural developments, for example, potentially provided a good number of affordable homes, but the need was greatest in the urban areas where the developments were generally smaller and less numerous.
- The local connection was particularly important in rural areas.
- There were approximately 4,000 social housing properties in Wyre.
- It was not possible, at present, to give a detailed ward-by-ward breakdown of supply and demand. The assumption was made that where an applicant currently lived would be where they wished to live, this being the case in the majority of instances.
- Mutual exchanges could still be made.
- The system, as revised, was a good one that worked well.

attended the meeting with Pamela Holroyd, Housing Options Team Leader.

David McArthur summarised the main elements of his report which updated the committee on the homelessness review and proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and Action Plan.

Mr McArthur highlighted three priorities, having regard to the national, regional and local context, which were:

- (i) To prevent homelessness, which was the main emphasis of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- (ii) To provide pathways to short and long term accommodation for those who were homeless and those at risk of homelessness
- (iii) To contribute to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of those homeless and those at risk of homelessness

Mental health was a particular priority under (iii) above.

David McArthur and Pamela Holroyd responded to points raised by members of the committee by adding:

- The council worked closely with a number of other partners.
- An annual count of rough sleepers was carried out.
- The number of 'real homeless' in Wyre was very small indeed.
- The 2017 Act brought in the legal duty on partners to refer someone who was at risk of becoming homeless.
- The main reasons for someone becoming homeless were (a) being thrown out by a landlord, (b) being thrown out by family and (c) domestic abuse.
- The council had strong links with other organisations for people aged 16-26.
- It was recognised that it was important to try to identify the 'hidden homeless', including by use of outreach work.
- The figure for "homelessness" included those threatened with homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.
- The council had an attitude of "we will not fail" when it came to dealing with homelessness.

The Chairman thanked David McArthur and Pamela Holroyd for attending the meeting and providing very useful information about the MyHomeChoice lettings system and the consultation on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

The Scrutiny Officer, Peter Foulsham, updated the committee about the progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20.

Three task groups were currently underway and all were very active, with a number of meetings having been held in recent weeks and others planned to take place within the next month. The proposed task group on Wyre's town

centres would commence once staffing pressures within the Economic Development team had been eased.

It was noted that an item on neighbourhood policing arrangements would be included on the agenda of the committee meeting to take place on 2 December 2019. Members were asked to identify questions in advance of the meeting so that the Chief Inspector could be advised in good time before the meeting.

A request had been received from the Management Board for the committee to consider setting up two sub-committees on (i) health and wellbeing and (ii) police and crime matters. A report on issues and options in relation to this request would be submitted by the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager in December for the committee's consideration.

Peter Foulsham reminded the committee about the next meeting of the North West Regional Strategic Scrutiny Network, which was to be held at Wyre on Friday 29 November. All councillors involved in scrutiny would be welcome to attend. It was further noted that Councillor Emma Ellison would take up her role as Chair of the Network at November's meeting.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.01 pm.

**Date of Publication:** 24 October 2019