
RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19th July, 2022

- Present:** Councillor Patrick McGinley (in the Chair),
Councillors Carole Haythornthwaite, Andrew Clegg, Noordad Aziz,
Dominik Allen, Scott Brerton, Bernard Dawson, Terry Hurn and
Paul Barton
Co-optees: Carole Haythornthwaite, Andrew Clegg, Noordad Aziz,
Dominik Allen, Scott Brerton, Bernard Dawson, Terry Hurn and
Paul Barton
- In Attendance:** Councillors Marlene Haworth and Joyce Plummer, Lyndsey Sims and
Teresa Phelan
- Apologies:** Councillor Paddy Short, Doug Hayes and Moss
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77 Apologies for absence, Substitutions, Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Paddy Short, Ken Moss and Doug Hayes. There were no declarations of interest.

78 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17th March 2022 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Resolved - That the minutes be received and approved as a correct record.

79 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes

The Scrutiny and Policy Officer submitted a report requesting that the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee give consideration to and approve the draft work programme for 2022/23. It was pointed out that although the report would be submitted to all three Overview and Scrutiny Committee's, the role of this committee was to approve only its own work programme.

He explained in detail the process for setting the work programme, and that all Councillors and Service Heads have had the opportunity to feed into the programme. Members of the public had also been given the opportunity to submit items for consideration. The work programme was not fixed and items could be added to the agenda throughout the year using one of several procedures outlined in the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

The draft work programmes had been submitted to Cabinet on 13th July 2022 for comments. Cabinet made no further comments.

Councillor Noordad Aziz asked that consideration be given to including an item on the work programme to review the performance of Council Buildings operated by 3rd parties. Councillors agreed that consideration should be given to how this topic can be scrutinised.

Resolved - That the Work Programme for the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2022/23 be approved as outlined, and consideration be given to how the Committee could most effectively scrutinise the performance of Council buildings operated by 3rd parties.

80 Hyndburn Leisure Annual Review

The Chair of the Committee welcomed Lyndsey Sims, Chief Executive of Hyndburn Leisure and Councillor Marlene Haworth, Deputy Leader of the Council to provide an annual review of Hyndburn Leisure. Hyndburn Leisure had recently published a public annual report which was distributed to members alongside the report which formed part of the agenda.

Lyndsey Sims drew attention to the following aspects of the report:

- The journey to zero subsidy
- 2021/22 performance and charity highlights
- Hyndburn Leisure's future vision: Investing in the Health and Wellbeing of our communities
- Leisure facility transformation

Councillor Marlene Haworth referred to the Leisure Transformation section of the report, and referenced a report which had been submitted to Cabinet on 22nd June 2022 titled "Leisure Estate Investment Programme – Procurement Strategy June 2022". She stated that this report was not a decision for the closure of Mercer Hall Leisure Centre to be replaced by a new facility at Wilson's Playing Fields, and reports will follow to Cabinet at a later date for the 3 other sites which are under consideration and form part of the review. Only once all proposed sites have been given full consideration will a decision be taken, and that decision will be based on a number of factors including Sport England support which is vital for any of the proposed sites to be viable.

Councillor Haworth also added that in her short time as the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, she was very impressed by the work of the Hyndburn Leisure team and their plans for the future.

The Chair invited members to ask questions. Lyndsey Sims gave thorough responses to questions on the following topics:

- Timeframe for memberships to be back to or above pre-covid levels
- Uses for Accrington Town Hall, and the role the building can play in bringing football into the town centre
- Hedging of utility rates
- Whether current swimming provision was enough to meet demand
- Increasing the diversity of the cultural offer
- Collaboration at both strategic and community level
- Use of facilities across townships
- Let's Move Hyndburn
- Investment in subsidised school holiday swimming
- Improvements to the town hall user experience

Lyndsey reported that Hyndburn Leisure were currently conducting a strategic review, and one major item for consideration is changing the name. Hyndburn Leisure play a large role in the borough's cultural offer and feel that this should potentially be reflected in the name of the organisation.

The Chair requested that that the Committee be provided with a breakdown of income and expenditure by building. Lyndsey agreed to provide this.

Resolved - That the report be noted

81 Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme

The Chair of the Committee welcomed Cllr Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Teresa Phelan, Revenues Manager to provide Overview and Scrutiny with an overview of the Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme and the Councils approach to the administration of this scheme.

Cllr Plummer provided a brief overview of the report which was submitted as part of the agenda. She drew attention to the following points:

- Council tax rebate eligibility criteria
- Households with a live direct debit instruction
- Discretionary Fund
- Number of rebates paid

Cllr Plummer and Teresa Phelan responded to the following questions:

- What efforts are being made to contact those people who have not made a claim who may not be digitally savvy?
- Why is the Council not being proactive and simply issuing cheques as per some of the business grants paid during the pandemic?
- How will people be contacted?
- What happens to those who do not claim by the closing date?

Cllr Plummer said that every effort was being made to contact people who had not yet claimed. Where email addresses were held, emails had been sent and where no email address was held, letters had been sent to the home. Information is readily available on the website and the Council has worked with Citizen's Advice.

In terms of processing the grants, the service is following Government guidelines and are not allowed to simply issue and send cheques, as they were in some cases for business grants during the pandemic. Also, the sheer volume of people eligible for this rebate in comparison to the number of businesses who were eligible for covid grants would not lend itself to this method.

If people do not claim by the closing date, the amount would be deducted from their Council tax bill. Although not ideal, this will ensure nobody will miss out on the grant.

Cllr Scott Brerton recognised the amount of work that had gone into this, and also the distribution of many other grants during the pandemic, and on behalf of the Committee wanted to thank the Benefits and Revenues staff.

The Chair wished for it to be minuted that the Committee recognises that no resident who is eligible for the council tax energy rebate will miss out on this payment, even if they do not claim it by the deadline.

Resolved - That the report be noted, and the Benefits and Revenues Service thanked for the work carried out to distribute numerous Government Grants which have been made available over the last 2 years.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed