
RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 15th October, 2024

Present: Councillor Stephen Button (in the Chair),
Councillors Paul Cox (Vice Chair), Bernard Dawson MBE, Andrew Clegg,
Judith Addison, Josh Allen and Heather Anderson
Co-optees: Tim O’Kane

In Attendance: Councillor Kate Walsh (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Sustainability)

Apologies: Councillors Jodi Clements and Downie

197 Apologies for absence, Substitutions, Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Jodie Clements and Co-optee, Richard Downie.

Councillor Heather Anderson acted as substitute representative for Councillor Jodie Clements.

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations declared at the meeting.

198 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 15th October 2024 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

199 Chair's Update

The Chair informed the Committee that a report had been submitted to Full Council on the 26th September 2024 to recommend the approval of Tim O’Kane and Richard Downie as Co-optees to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee was informed that Full Council had approved the appointment of both Co-optees for the two Municipal years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026. They noted that there were two further vacant Co-optee positions that would be discussed later in the meeting.

Committee was also informed that item 7 of the agenda – Impact of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) on Hyndburn, had been deferred to a future meeting.

Due to a number of items being deferred to future meetings, Members were informed that items on the work programme would need to be reconsidered and, as such, the work programme would be re-circulated to all Members of the Committee.

200 Progress in Delivering Energy Efficiency Measures in Hyndburn Domestic Properties

A report was submitted by Chris Gregory (Housing Strategy & Policy Manager) and Tim Brodest (Home Energy Reduction Officer) on behalf of the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Councillor Kate Walsh. The report provided information about the range of energy efficiency measures installed in domestic properties in Hyndburn through various energy funding programmes and grant schemes. There was also a summary of the approach taken by the Council to promote funding opportunities, engage residents and support them to apply for funding and progress made in increasing awareness and take up of funding since the introduction of a 'Home Energy Reduction Officer' (HERO) post.

Councillor Kate Walsh, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Sustainability reported on progress in delivering energy efficiency measures in Hyndburn Domestic Properties. She reported that there had been significant progress in improving energy efficiency in properties in the borough, particularly since the introduction of the Home Energy Reduction Officer (HERO) post. She explained that the Council had been more proactive since the establishment of the Officer post and more domestic properties had been advised of the availability of grants to improve home energy efficiency. She referred to the Council's commitment in reducing carbon emissions and reaching net zero targets and referred to the challenges Hyndburn faced in reducing carbon emissions, largely due to Hyndburn's property types. She acknowledged that there was a lot of work to be done.

Responses were provided to the following advanced questions:

1. Reference was made to the air pollution created by the domestic wood burner and if this was being addressed?
2. The Committee requested information on the vetting process for companies employed to carry out work on properties, in respect of work standards.
3. The Committee asked for information on how people could complain about standards of work.

The Committee was informed that:

- Wood burners had to be fitted and used in accordance with building regulations. Only a small proportion of heating sources were made up of wood burners in Hyndburn and residents would be required to burn fuels in accordance with regulation standards. Properties not burning appropriate fuels could be reported to the Council.
- With regards to work being carried out by contractors, the Committee was informed that these companies were not employed directly by the Council as grants were administered by either Homewise – HBC Affordable Warmth – or Rhea Projects – LCC Affordable Warmth. Both Homewise and Rhea have on-board procedures in place for contractors and they had to be qualified/certified for what the work they carried out. If residents felt the need to complain, this could be done directly to the contractor and raised with the administrators if still not happy. After this process, residents could complain to Hyndburn Borough Council if they were still dissatisfied.

Discussions followed and Members of the Committee made the following comments:

- Greater education was required on the use of woodburners.
- There was a lack of enforcement action of inappropriate fuel use in woodburners.
- Some housing types were more difficult to retrofit than others.
- Hyndburn had a lot of old houses, particularly terraced housing and houses in conservation areas, which were more difficult to improve energy efficiency.

- The average housing price of many properties in the borough meant that the cost of retrofitting would be too high against the value of the property.
- A proposal that the Council introduced a regeneration scheme to gradually remove terraced housing and replace it with new housing, of today's standards.
- Bricks on older properties should be recycled.
- Many people living in older properties in the borough were just above the threshold for receiving energy efficiency grants and therefore, would not benefit financially from carrying out retrofitting on their properties. Funding was not accessible for many people.
- Figures on energy efficiency only related to gas central heating and not other forms of heating.
- Information should be made available to residents in respect of the many different options available on the market that would improving energy efficiency on different properties types.
- Selective licensing should be reintroduced to ensure standards of private rented properties were maintained.

The Homes Energy Reduction Officer informed the Committee that all funding acquired from Lancashire County Council had been used. Further funding announced was half of the amount previously provided and would need to be spent before the end of March 2025. He explained that there was currently a waiting list for grant funding and gave details of the number of properties that had already been helped through grant funding.

Resolved

(1) That Committee note the progress made in delivering energy efficiency measures to domestic properties in Hyndburn through energy funding programmes and grant schemes; and

(2) That the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability sends a letter to the Minister of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, to request:

- that Hyndburn receives additional energy funding due to the socio economic factors of the borough which increases the challenges of lowering the borough's total carbon emissions by 68% by 2030 and reaching Net Zero by 2050.

- an increase in the threshold for the acquisition of home energy efficiency grant funding due to many residents residing in properties where values would not be offset by the cost of retrofitting and who are currently just above the financial threshold for meeting grants criteria; and

- that the allocation of grant funding is brought back into public control to ensure standards of workmanship are maintained and that the public are protected from fraudulent and poor workmanship.

201 Impact of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) on Hyndburn

Item deferred to a future meeting.

202 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved - That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item, when it was likely, in view of the nature of the proceedings that there would otherwise be disclosure of exempt information within the Paragraph Schedule 12A of the Act specified at the item.

203 Appointment of Co-optees

Exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, Paragraph 1 – Information relating to any individual

The Scrutiny and Policy Officer submitted a report to inform Members of the two Co-optee appointments formally made by Council to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting held on 26th September 2024. The Co-optees appointed were Richard Downie and Tim O’Kane.

The report also requested the Committee to consider further nominations for the remaining two vacant co-optee posts on the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Three nominations had been received in advance of the meeting, two from Councillor Zak Khan who nominated Nick Whittaker and Eddie O’Brien and one nomination from Councillor Kimberley Whitehead who nominated Christine Heys.

The Committee gave consideration to the nominations and determined that Eddie O’Brien and Christine Heys should be recommended to Full Council for the remaining two co-optee posts.

Resolved - That the nominations for Eddie O’Brien and Christine Heys as co-optees on the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee be accepted and recommended to Full Council for approval for a duration of two Municipal Years, 2024-25 and 2025-26.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed