
RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23rd July, 2025

Present: Councillor Noordad Aziz (in the Chair),
Councillors Andrew Clegg, Heather Anderson, David Heap,
Judith Addison and Steven Smithson
Co-optees: Christine Heys, Richard Downie and Tim O'Kane

In Attendance: Councillor Munsif Dad, Lee Middlehurst (Head of Benefits, Revenues and Customer Services) and Jane Windle (Customer Contact Centre Manager)
Stuart Sambrook (Policy Manager)
Lyndsey Sims (Chief Executive of Hyndburn Leisure Trust)

Apologies: Councillors Paul Cox and Mike Booth

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mike Booth and Paul Cox.

Councillors Bernard Dawson and Jodi Clements acted as substitute representatives for Councillors Mike Booth and Paul Cox, respectively.

Councillor Aziz declared a personal interest in item 5 - Hyndburn Leisure Trust, due to his children attending swimming lessons run by Hyndburn Leisure Trust. Cllr Aziz remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and determination of this item.

Cllr Aziz also acknowledged that, having been a Cabinet Member during the municipal year 2024-25, he had been involved in decision making processes and therefore, he indicated that he would declare an interest should he consider there to be a conflict of interest arising during the meeting.

104 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meetings of Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committees held on 20th February 2025 and 18th March 2025 were submitted for approval as correct records.

Resolved **- That the Minutes of the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committees held on 20th February 2025 and 18th March 2025 be received and approved as correct records.**

105 Overview & Scrutiny Work Programmes

The Overview & Scrutiny Officer submitted a report seeking approval of the work programme for the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee for 2025-26. Members were reminded that items could be added to the programme throughout the year should it be considered important and relevant and approved by the Chair of the Committee.

Resolved **- That the work programme for the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee for 2025-26 be approved.**

Change in Order of Items Considered on the Agenda

The order of items considered on the agenda were moved to accommodate availability for presentations as follows:

Item 4 – Performance Review Report – moved to item 5 of the agenda

Item 5 – Hyndburn Leisure Trust Annual Report – moved to item 6 of the agenda

Item 6 – Household Support Fund – moved to item 4 of the agenda.

106 Household Support Fund

The Head of Benefits, Revenues and Customer Contact submitted a report to provide the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Household Support Fund (HSF) scheme and the Council's approach to the administration of this scheme.

Councillor Dad, Leader of the Council, attended the meeting to report on the item and to answer questions submitted by the Committee. He provided an overview of the Household Support Fund and informed the Committee of an extension to funding until March 2026. He explained that the aim of the Fund was to provide immediate financial assistance to residents facing financial challenges and that it was open to all residents regardless of whether they were in receipt of benefits.

The Committee had submitted questions to the Officer, in advance of the meeting, which had been responded to. These referred to the following issues:

- How clear was the application process?
- If the Council processed all applications for funding, irrespective of how they applied?
 - Which organisations were included in those that could refer applicants?
 - Which organisations were included in those listed under Food Grant networks?
 - The timeframe for applying to receive DHP?
 - Why the administration of the Household Support Fund was taken back in house by Hyndburn Borough Council?
 - Would the Council need to take on extra staff now that the HSF was being processed in house again and what had happened to the staff that had work for Hyndburn Leisure Trust who had processed applications previously?

A summary of the responses included:

Hyndburn Borough Council had been approached by Hyndburn Leisure Trust to advise that, due to employee changes, they would not be able to administer HSF from 1st April 2025, consequently, the Council had agreed to take back this responsibility. The Council had considered the previous successful delivery of the Fund by Hyndburn Leisure Trust and taken the decision to administer the Fund in the same way, to ensure smooth transition. The Head of Benefits, Revenues and Customer Services confirmed that all applications were processed by the Council, irrespective of how applications were submitted. He provided a list of the Direct Referral organisations and those organisations who were listed under the Food Grant Network. He reported that applications would be processed within two weeks of receipt and that the Council currently had enough staffing capacity to deal with the processing of applications.

Members were also provided with further opportunity to ask questions at the meeting. Questions included:

- Advice on where residents were directed to, to apply for the Funding.
- Who decided how much a person was eligible for?
- How the Household Support Fund was promoted and if this could be improved?
- Applications for Funding were relevant to different categories, was it possible to apply for more than one category?
- Had there been a difference in application figures between the administrations by Hyndburn Leisure Trust and the Council?

Responses to the above questions were given at the meeting:

The Committee was informed that people could apply for funding directly to the Council or be referred by one of the supporting organisations. All applications were processed by the Council. The level of award was indicative to the application.

In respect of ensuring that residents were aware of the availability of the Funding, the Leader of the Council informed the Committee that social media had been used to promote the Funding as well as partner organisations providing advice on its existence. He pointed out that the aim was to maintain awareness of the scheme and that further promotion would take place through schools as a way of accessing families in need of support.

In relation to the number of categories that applicants could apply for, Members were told that the Council would work with applicants although costs had to be kept down.

In respect of a comparison between the administration of the Funding by Hyndburn Borough Council and Hyndburn Leisure Trust, the Committee was informed that the level of funding had reduced but comparisons were still too early to make.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Hyndburn Leisure Trust for their work in previously administering the Household Support Fund.

Resolved

- (1) **That there be further promotion to increase awareness of the Household Support Fund on the Council's social media;**
- (2) **That Committee Members be provided with details of how residents can apply for Funding; and**
- (3) **That the Head of Benefits, Revenues and Customer Services provides Committee Members with data on the categories of applicants who have applied for funding.**

107 Performance Review Report

The Policy Manager submitted a report to provide a performance update on the Council's Sustainability Environment Key Performance Indicators as part of the Council's performance monitoring review.

He reported that the Corporate Performance Review held in 2024 had recommended that the Council monitored its performance progress. Subsequently, a performance review report had been submitted to the Resource Overview & Scrutiny Committee held in January 2025, at which the Committee had recommended that future Performance Review reports should only focus on elements of performance. Subsequently, the theme of this report was Sustainability (Environment). This covered recycling rates, household waste, fly tipping, housing repair, vacant dwellings, carbon emissions, Green Flags and air pollution.

The Policy Manager referred to appendix 1 of the report which listed the Sustainability theme's KPIs (eight indicators) and compared performance over the past 5 years, benchmarking and providing Service Manager commentary. He explained that of the eight indicators, three had seen an improvement in their direction of travel, four had stayed the same and one had seen a downturn compare with previous years.

The three indicators that had seen an improvement in performance were: the number of fly tipping incidents, the number of complaints of housing disrepair and the number of Green Flag parks held. The indicator that had slightly dropped was the household recycling rate. This had seen a slight drop from 32.2% to 31.6% although this was still below the Lancashire average of 39%. The Committee was informed that this figure included garden waste and would be affected by each borough's housing stock and garden type. In a positive light, Hyndburn did have the highest rates of dry recycling across Lancashire and residual household waste which had remained significantly below the Lancashire average.

The Committee had submitted a number of questions, in advance to the meeting, which had been responded to and referred to the following issues:

- Fly tipping could be effected by volume as well as the number of incidents – could this be included in performance monitoring?
- Fly tipping of mattresses was a problem, was a delay in collecting bulky waste a contributory factor to this?
- Was there data on the fly tipping of bulky waste?
- Could data on 'housing standards disrepair' be broken down into further categories?
- Why do the performance indicator rates show garden waste and residual household waste to be comparably worse than neighbouring authorities?

Committee Members also asked additional questions at the meeting as follows:

- Is there anything that can be done to target air pollution, particularly pollution from traffic in the Clayton Triangle area.
- With reference to Household Waste Recycling rates, could the Council do more to educate residents to boost rates of recycling.
- People did not want to pay for disposing of their waste so this often led to fly tipping. Was the problem of fly tipping worse on private land? Could data be provided?
- Could an improved bulky waste disposal service and better advertisement of the service help to reduce rates of fly tipping?
- Did the abolition of the selective landlord licensing scheme have an impact on the number of housing disrepair complaints?
- Conversion of properties into HMOs was now common and many were of an age where improvements would be required.
- Were any of the Green Flag parks in danger of losing the qualification?
- Was there any further information relating to the number of damp, mould housing disrepair complaints.

The Policy Manager reported that the Council was only responsible for monitoring certain pollutants and that he was able to provide a summary of which pollutants the Council monitored and which they didn't.

In respect of housing disrepair complaints numbers were down on previous year's figures, which was partly due to the milder weather conditions experienced in winter 24/25. He pointed out that Hyndburn had a large number of terraced properties which required heating and ventilation or would fall into poor condition. He reported that the causes of complaint

could be broken down into different categories and that this information could be shared with Councillors.

He referred to the Council's carbon footprint and informed the Committee that the Council had been able to move towards its net zero target but this had started to plateau in recent years. He pointed out that to make any further significance it would require funding. Should funding not be made available then a process of working on offsetting emissions would be required along with a promotion campaign to encourage residents to participate in reducing emissions by making small changes themselves.

Green flags in parks had made significant progress in recent years with 11 parks holding the award.

The Policy Manager explained that the recycling figures for Hyndburn were good and that the low rate of residual household waste showed that residents were recycling. He pointed out that this performance data was often misinterpreted. He informed the Committee that Officers had not considered there to be a problem with mattresses being fly tipped.

A Member reported that data showing the number of incidents of fly tipping and issues around bulky waste disposal (e.g. mattresses) may not always be accurate as the Council often told residents to leave reported waste for later collection, sometimes weeks later. It was considered that this along with other issues such as narrow back alleys could have contributed to inaccurate or misinterpreted performance monitoring figures.

The Policy Manager reported that he would refer back any concerns/comments raised at the meeting to the relevant Officers.

Resolved (1) That the report be noted; and
(2) That the Policy Manager reports back to the relevant Officers on issues raised by the Committee.

108 Hyndburn Leisure Services Annual Review

The Chief Executive of Hyndburn Leisure (HL), Lyndsey Sims, presented the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a progress report for Hyndburn Leisure, highlighting in-year challenges, opportunities and future plans.

She reported on the Trust's financial position including:

- Reducing grant funding paid to the Trust by Hyndburn Borough Council to zero since 2008-9.
- The year-on-year reductions to the management fee providing cumulative savings to the Council of over £9 million (exclusive of VAT).
- External factors, over the last 3 years, had meant that the charity had required a subsidy from the Council to maintain the operation of all facilities and services. A subsidy of £1 million had been agreed for 2024-25 which represented 17.5% of the overall turnover in 2024-25.
- In 2024-25 an overall operating profit of £15k was achieved.
- Over the next two years, the Trust aimed to move back towards a zero operating subsidy although the Charity had indicated to the Council that a subsidy of around £700k would be required for 2025-26.

The Chief Executive of HL also referred to the work of the Charity and their achievements in respect of project work to improve health and wellbeing in the community. She explained that they worked with other partners to deliver projects to support people's needs and explained how this had had a beneficial impact on people's lives, which the Charity was proud of. She reported that the Trust would continue work around improving healthy outcomes and reducing inequalities for the community by working closely with stakeholders across sectors such as public health, funders and service users. In 2024-25 there had been 611,941 attendees at their facilities generating an estimated £19.5 million of social and economic benefit to Hyndburn.

She informed the Committee of the launch of a new mobile app providing people with more flexibility when booking activities. The Trust had also made efforts to reduce its carbon footprint and, in doing so, made their facilities more energy efficient and they had launched its most recent company strategy, updated annually, which had four major pillars: People, Provision, Partnerships and Performance.

Prior to the meeting, the Committee had submitted a number of questions in advance which had been responded to. The issues raised related to:

- The future plans of Hyndburn Leisure Trust, in respect of the Local Government Review
- Plans and utilisation of Accrington Town Hall and its facilities
- Accrington Town Hall revenue and its expenditure
- Integration into town centre plans for Accrington Town Hall
- Using Accrington Town Hall as a centre for performances?
- Plans for separating the arts and entertainment side of the Trust from the sports side
- The Trust working with neighbouring authorities to provide entertainment provision
- Consideration of the Trust working with bodies such as IMEP to provide entertainment
- Questions relating to running costs and subsidies.

Responses to the above questions were provided at the meeting. The main points were summarised as below:

The Trust did not have any current plans to operate differently but would continue to work closely with Hyndburn Borough Council and other East Lancashire Leisure Trusts and Councils. The Chief Executive of the Trust reported that future plans for Accrington Town Hall included being open to the idea of the facility moving back into Council control as part of the Council's Culture & Heritage plans.

In respect of concern that Accrington Town Hall was being underused, she referred to the number of visitors and type of activities that had taken place in the Town Hall during 2024-25. She reported on the difficulty of booking performance events due to the size and shape of the stage not being suitable and that funding was not currently available to make the necessary changes. She explained that it was not always possible to open the Town Hall during major events in the town centre due to operating costs and that there were no plans to separate the arts and entertainment side of the Trust from its sporting facilities. The Trust was represented on the Town Centre Board and was committed to working with the Council and other stakeholders to ensure that the operating focus for the Town Hall complimented town centre plans.

The Chief Executive of HL reported that they were in the process of developing a proposal for Mercer Hall and Accrington Town Hall to help with entertainment provision and were

working with partners, including Ossy Fest to identify potential opportunities for further collaboration in the future.

Revenue being brought into the Town Hall was generated at £179k income and she gave details of the main expenditure costs. She reported that a subsidy control assessment had been completed by the Council and that any debt owed to the Council related to other financial years (not 2024-25). The Trust's 2025-26 draft budget included an assumption that the Trust would operate Wilson Sports Village from October 2025 and the lease approved would have no effect on the 2025-26 budget.

In respect of running costs of HL and the subsidy of £1m given to offset the outstanding debt, she responded that the subsidy was awarded to support the operating costs during 2024-25 and explained how, in the past the annual operating subsidy had been agreed in advance of the financial year commencing and was paid in monthly instalments. She gave details of how the subsidy had been used. She informed the Committee that the financial operating position for 2024-25 was a £15k profit.

Further questions were raised by Members of the Committee including the following:

- With reference to the swimming pool facility at the new Wilson Sports Village, she was asked how many users would be required to break even and if this would impact swimming facilities at other Trust venues.
- What action was being taken to prevent future operating losses and less reliance on the Council providing subsidy.
- Were there plans to upgrade the facilities at Accrington Town Hall and how could better use be made of this venue. Reference was made to the cost of hiring the Town Hall, the Town Hall often being closed and the popularity of the Tourist Information Centre that had once been located in the Town Hall.
- Could the provision of niche sports attract more people into the borough.
- Could the Leisure Trust work with other partners to enhance facilities.

Responses:

- It was estimated that the financial breakeven point for the new swimming facility at Wilson's Sports Village should take place within the first 9 months with 1100 Members and 600 swimming lessons and that it wasn't anticipated to have an impact on the Trust's other swimming facilities.
- It was explained that the subsidy and other grants were used to offset costs and to deliver activities. Expenditures would have to be reduced if this funding was not available.
- It was likely that a report would be submitted to Cabinet in September 2025 updating the Council on the Leisure Trust's position.
- There had been funding applications for upgrading the Town Hall, which would cost in the region of £25k
- Members were informed that the circumstances in running the Town Hall now were not comparable with that of the past. She did, however, indicate that should Members want this, costs could be estimated. She referred to the annual losses made on the Town Hall operating costs each year, including high energy and staffing costs.
- New ideas for sporting events and facilities were welcomed.
- The Trust already worked closely with other partners and was open to further partnership working.

Resolved

- (1) That a list of buildings, operated by Hyndburn Leisure Trust, be shared with Members of the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and
- (2) That the report be noted.

109 Co-optee Nominations

The Overview & Scrutiny Officer submitted a report to inform the Committee that there was still a co-optee vacancy for a young person (18 – 25 years). She reported that the co-optee position would cover the remaining municipal year for 2025-26 and invited the Committee to submit nominations. She informed the Committee that nominations would be considered at the next Committee and any recommendations being submitted to Full Council for approval.

The Committee suggested that nominations should be sought using social media and that consideration should also be given in respect of a youth M.P. or a young person interested in politics.

Resolved

- That the report be noted.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed