

**CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

HELD: 5 DECEMBER 2013

Start: 7.30pm

Finish: 9.30pm

PRESENT: Bailey (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs Atherley Greenall
 Mrs Baybutt Griffiths
 Mrs Blake G Hodson
 Delaney J Hodson
 Dereli Mrs Houlgrave
 Mrs C Evans McKay
 Fillis Ms Melling
 Fowler Nolan
 Gibson Wright

Officers: Assistant Director Community Services (Mr D Tilleray)
 Economic Regeneration Manager (Ms P Huber)
 Commercial, Safety and Licensing Manager (Mr P Charlson)
 Housing Needs and Allocations Manager (Ms N Bradley)
 Planning Officer (Mr D Carr)
 Assistant Solicitor (Mr M Hynes)
 Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs C A Jackson)

155. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

156. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Members noted the termination of membership of Councillors L Hodson and Mrs Stephenson and the appointment of Councillors J Hodson and Greenall, for this meeting only, giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

157. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

158. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

159. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of a Party Whip.

160. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 October 2013 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

161. WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

Members considered the following two presentations in relation to the topic 'Night-time Economy'.

162. NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

Presentation 1

Consideration was given to the presentation by the Economic Regeneration Manager. The presentation was supported by a series of slides as contained on pages 165 to 168 of the Book of Reports. The information provided included:

The composition of the Economic Regeneration Team and the key areas of their work and detail in relation to the work undertaken by the team including:

- Business Support - business enquiries handled; the large companies based in the Borough; start-up businesses and business events supported.
- Visitor Economy - membership of strategic bodies that supports tourism in Lancashire including: Market Lancashire; Lancashire Tourism Forum via Visit Lancashire and facts/figures that have established Lancashire as having the second largest business visitor in the North West.

It was reported that the Night-Time Economy is worth £66 billion to the UK Economy with Purple Flag Status, an award that celebrated quality, diversity and vibrancy, being awarded to some of the North West leading cities, including Liverpool, Manchester and Preston. It was further reported that it is starting to be recognised that there is a lull in the evening economy between 5pm and 7pm and that small town and city centres need to evolve to meet changing attitudes. Opportunities cited included attracting families; street theatre / festivals and adopting more European-style pavement bars, thereby making more use of the street space. Examples were given of how cities, such as Liverpool and Belfast, are using events such as 'Light Night' to raise their profiles to attract evening visitors and increase weekly spending between 5pm and 10pm.

The Economic Regeneration Manager concluded with reference to the opportunities for town centres in West Lancashire including: the work undertaken by 'Love Ormskirk'; the developing Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy and redevelopment of Skelmersdale Town Centre.

Presentation 2

Consideration was given to the presentation by the Commercial, Safety and Licensing Manager. The presentation was supported by a series of slides as contained on pages 169 to 173 of the Book of Reports. Information provided included:

- The purpose of licensing and a snap-shot of the Licensing Act 2003 (“the Act”) referencing the 4 licensing objectives (prevention of crime & disorder; public safety; prevention of public nuisance and protection of children from harm) that underpinned that legislation.
- The relevant parts of “the Act” related to the sale and supply of alcohol; the provision of regulated entertainment and late night refreshment (between 11pm and 5pm); and associated documents that provide guidance, including the WLBC Licensing Policy.
- The responsible authorities and relevant agencies involved with the control of licensed operations (day and night time) related to licensed premises and enforcement.

The Commercial, Safety and Licensing Manager, reported on recent changes including the deregulation of some activities between 8am and 11pm; temporary event notices; constraints and the review of licensing and certificates.

The presentation concluded with an explanation of some of the actions available to the relevant licensing Committee when reviewing existing licences and certificates. It was stressed that as there is no requirement to deviate from the Guidance unless sufficient evidence is provided to do so.

Members discussed, raised questions/comments in relation to:

- The contribution of other areas in West Lancashire to the night-time economy: town and village centres; organised events; rural pubs and eating places.
- Impact as a result of relaxation of licensable activities: notably audience numbers at events (now 500).
- Visitor information: destination/starting point of visitors to the Borough; visitor experience; relationship with neighbouring areas to attract visitors to West Lancashire.
- Marketing Lancashire: activities; developing Lancashire as a place to visit; work; study and invest.
- Advantages/Disadvantages to expanding the night-time economy after 5.00pm: developing strategies; working with partner agencies; impact on communities.
- Alcohol, crime and disorder in the night-time economy: tools/options available and impact (EMRO; Late Night Levy); financial implications of initiatives; problem premises; associated offences; under-age sales.
- National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme - understanding ratings; details in relation to those rated 3 or below.
- Magistrates and local authority responsibilities since the change in the licensing role.
- The involvement/impact/experience of others (Ormskirk Town Centre): door people; police; street pastors; taxi firms; Edge Hill University and influx of larger eating/drinking establishments.

The Economic Regeneration Manager and Commercial Safety & Licensing Manager responded to questions.

It was agreed that the provision of a list of accessible related information, as described by the Assistant Director Community Services, would be useful.

- RESOLVED A. That the presentations be noted.
- B. That the Assistant Director Community Services make arrangements for a list of readily-accessible information available to our Licensing Service (including a link to the relevant Police Website), to be circulated.

(Note: Councillor Gibson joined the meeting during Presentation 1 and was present for the remainder of the meeting.)

163. MEMBERS ITEM - RELETTING OF LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING

The item had been included on the agenda following agreement at the last meeting of the Committee held on 24 October 2013 for a presentation relating to issues raised, whilst discussing performance indicators (PIs), regarding the number of houses empty and delays in re-letting that had impacted on the relevant PI for the period.

The Housing Needs and Allocations Manager attended the meeting and gave an oral presentation on the item.

Information was provided related to the average days to re-let properties and the rise in the figures in the first two quarters of 2013/14 that had led to the missed target. Reasons reported for the drop included: pressures on the budget; the number of void properties; housing backlog and some of the mitigating reasons that had affected performance. It was explained that in relation to housing stock availability other factors had also contributed including a lower demand for certain properties. In relation to the backlog of properties it was stated that this was expected to be completed by early 2014 and improvements had been made to monitoring contract performance.

In relation to allocations, the Housing Needs and Allocations Manager, described the pro-active approach in relation to re-letting, including regular surgeries; positional advertisement of properties and a more flexible approach to re-letting. Additional actions were also being undertaken to stimulate re-lets included: re-let signage; declassification of some sheltered properties that were proving hard to let; reduction to the age-limit to those not part of the scheme.

In conclusion it was reported that by taking the measures indicated it was anticipated that performance would improve and whilst this might not be seen in PI data collected for the next quarter an improvement should be seen in subsequent quarters.

In discussion comments and questions were made in relation to:

- The circulation of void property details to the Parish Clerks.
- Payments related to sheltered housing.
- Bidding process and effect on choice.
- Long term empty homes - process to re-let.
- Data relating to: waiting list; loss of income; procurement process for kitchens.
- Availability of 1 or 2 bedroom properties.

- Relaxation of some restrictions - advantages/disadvantages.
- Choice/location of properties - aspirations; family associations; public transport; medical needs.
- Impact of voids rent loss on HRA budget.
- Process / targets / tenant occupation related to kitchen refurbishments.

The Housing Needs and Allocations Manager responded to questions making reference in the response to the bidding process and policies, including the Tenants' Downsizing Scheme.

Following conclusion of the discussion it was agreed that a request be made for information to come forward, to a future meeting of the Committee, on Choice Based-Lettings.

RESOLVED C. That the presentation be noted.

- D. That the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration be requested to put in place arrangements for a representative to attend a future meeting of the Committee to provide information on 'Choice Based-Lettings'.

164. CYCLING IN WEST LANCASHIRE - PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director Community Services that gave details on progress since the review entitled 'Cycling in West Lancashire', concluded in February 2013 as contained on pages 155 to 155 of the Book of Reports. A response from the Director of Transport & Environment (LCC) was circulated at the meeting.

The Planning Officer (Dominic Carr) attended the meeting and outlined progress since the conclusion of the review.

Members discussed, raised questions/comments particularly in relation to cycling initiatives in the Borough including:

- Schemes to encourage new cyclists and make cycling safer.
- Guidance / proposals as part of the Local Sustainable Transport Plan: links to "Route 91" (Lancashire Cycleway Southern Loop); Sefton Coastal Path cycleway; creating new routes (exampled success of Guild Wheel cycleway)
- The cycle tracks that had / were being developed including: Pier (Wigan) to Pier (Southport) track; Ormskirk Town Centre to Edge Hill route.
- Bicycle Recycling Initiative: progress.
- Cycle Hire Scheme - locations; facilities; expansion of scheme.

The Planning Officer responded to questions, making reference to the Edge Hill University Ormskirk Campus Travel Plan and the draft Highways & Transportation Master Plan for West Lancashire. The latter of which was currently being developed by LCC and will provide a vision of the transport network in the Borough over the coming decade.

RESOLVED That progress on actions undertaken since the completion of the 'Cycling in West Lancashire' Review be noted.

(Note: 1. The Chairman left the meeting at the commencement of this item, whereupon the Vice-Chairman took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.
2. Councillor Dereli left the meeting during consideration of this item.)

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Chairman