

Policy & Service Review Scrutiny Committee



Date	13 July 2006
Venue	Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Committee members	Raymond Norsworthy (Chairman) Martin Taylor (Vice-Chairman) Maxine Chew, Elizabeth Clarkson, Elizabeth Oades, Dawn Prestwich, Fabian Wilson
Other Councillors	Patricia Fieldhouse, Paul Rigby and William Thompson
Officers	Stuart Handley, Richard Wood, Allan Oldfield, Tracy Scholes, Annie Womack

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Policy & Service Review Community Forum meeting held on 18 May 2006 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

Nil

4. Gambling Act 2005

Stuart Handley (Consumer Wellbeing and Protection) and Councillor Patricia Fieldhouse (Portfolio holder) presented a joint report on the new Gambling Act 2005.

Members were advised that the new Act imposed new duties on local authorities to licence premises used for gambling and sought to control all forms of gambling. During 2006 Council must consult on and adopt a licensing policy for gambling, in accordance with the Act.

A copy of a guide to the Act was circulated with the agenda.

It was further reported that the Act required the licensing authority to determine a statement of principles that it proposed to apply when exercising its functions under the Act. Those who may be affected by it must be consulted as part of the process. In accordance with the Act the Authority was required to publish the policy statement by the 31st January 2007.

Following a report presented to the Licensing Committee meeting held on the 31st May 2006, members approved the draft Licensing Policy (attached to the agenda papers) which was titled 'Draft Statement of Principles'. The Policy had been drafted in accordance with the Act and guidance issued by the Gambling Commission.

Concerns were raised about the potential impact the new duty would have on the licensing team in terms of the additional work created. Stuart Handley indicated that the new requirement would be undertaken within existing resources and its impact would be kept under review. It was commented that there would be no where as near the impact that the Licensing Act had on staffing levels. Stuart Handley did not envisage the need to set up many licensing panels to deal with this issue and most licenses would be transferred across on the same terms and conditions with the license period being indefinite. The Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Councillor Dawn Prestwich, commented that she was confident that the Licensing Committee could cope with the increased workload and praised the good staff within the licensing team who she had faith in being able to cope with the implementation of the requirements of the Gambling Act 2005.

In addition, members voiced comments about there being a need for robust enforcement. Stuart Handley reported that a risk based inspection process would be implemented. Councillor Patricia Fieldhouse, the Portfolio Holder was requested to keep under review whether the right level of resources was available to support this inspection/enforcement process and the Committee wished it to be noted that it was supportive of extra resources being found to support this activity if this proved necessary. Councillor Fieldhouse agreed to keep this under review.

Following discussion the Committee RESOLVED to approve the draft Licensing Policy.

5. Houses in multiple occupation (HMO) Licensing Policy

Richard Wood (Consumer Wellbeing and Protection) presented a report on a policy written jointly by Fylde and Wyre Borough Council's on Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

The report set out the statutory requirement for the policy, statistical information, and details of the requirements for certain HMOs to be licensed and the proposed licensing fee structure.

Richard Wood reported that around 30 to 50 properties would be covered by the new Act which would require licensees to be issued with effect from July. There would be an inspection process, which would follow this. Mr. Wood also reported the license fee had been set at £800 for both Wyre and Fylde Borough Councils after careful review of an appropriate pricing structure.

Members raised problems in the St. Albans Road/St. David's Road area and wondered if this new inspection regime could be applied to other HMO properties not covered by the new mandatory licensing requirements. It was reported that there are discretionary powers to designate other areas or property types for selective licensing. However, the discretionary power could only be implemented if it was consistent with part of a wider spectrum of activities and consistent with housing strategy objectives. However, Mr. Wood reported that some of the areas, which had been reported as causing concern, would be covered in some part by the mandatory licensing. Councillor Norsworthy, Chairman of the Committee requested Councillor Miss Fieldhouse to keep this issue under review and requested if an item could be included within the Work Plan of the Policy and Service Review Committee in 12 months time. In particular, Councillor Norsworthy requested the Portfolio Holder to provide an update on whether properties in the areas as noted as a concern were covered by the mandatory licensing and requested that consideration be given to what member involvement might be appropriate.

Following a full debate the committee RESOLVED:

1. To approve the HMO licensing policy and associated fee of £800 per licence.
5. To delegate to the Executive Manager of Consumer Wellbeing and Protection, in consultation with the Community and Social Wellbeing Portfolio Holder any amendments that require to be made to the policy.

6. Electronic service delivery and customer transaction policy

Allan Oldfield (Policy and Performance Executive Manager) presented a report on the electronic service delivery and customer transaction policy.

The report provided details of the shift in corporate policy from the implementation of electronic means of service delivery to the uptake of electronic means of service delivery across all service areas of the council. Details of the national transformational policy were outlined in the report and the link they have to the technologies developed as part of the e-service delivery agenda.

In response to an issue raised by Councillor Norsworthy, Allan Oldfield gave an assurance that the introduction of this policy would have no detrimental effect to existing availability of face to face or telephone contact. Members also sought clarification as to what transactions could now be undertaken on-

line and the link to find this information is

<http://www.fylde.gov.uk/ccm/content/website/services.en/>

Following consideration of this matter the Committee RESOLVED:

1. To support the shift in focus of corporate policy from the implementation of e-service delivery (IEG) and the take up of e-service transactions in all service areas to achieve efficiency savings and improve access to council services.
2. To support the policy to map, review and re-design all service transactions to ensure that they are focused on the requirements of the customer.
3. To ensure, where appropriate, that future policy reviews placed before the committee from any service area of the council incorporates the requirement to provide and promote electronic means of service delivery and transform customer transactions.

7. Member Champion presentation - overview of council assets

Councillor William Thompson (Member Champion for Council Assets) attended the meeting and gave a presentation of his role. Councillor Thompson gave a presentation on some of the council's portfolio of assets and provided a commentary on possible uses.

Councillor Paul Rigby, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency thanked Councillor Thompson for the support he gave him in his role as Portfolio Holder.

The Committee RESOLVED:

To thank Councillor Thompson for his work as Member Champion for Council Assets.
