



MINUTES

Internal Affairs Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Tuesday, 20 June 2023
Venue:	Council Chamber, Town Hall, St Annes Road West, St Annes, FY8 1LW
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Susan Fazackerley MBE (Chairman) Councillor John Kirkham (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Damian Buckley, Peter Collins (substitute), Joanne Gardner, Cheryl Little, Ed Nash, Sandra Pitman, Richard Redcliffe, Andrew Redfearn, Bill Taylor, Viv Willder
Other Councillors Present:	Karen Buckley, Chris Dixon, Michelle Morris, Jayne Nixon
Officers Present:	Gemma Broadley, Ian Curtis, Mark Evans, Andrew Loynd, Allan Oldfield, Alex Scrivens, Christine Wood
Other Attendees:	Two members of the public

1. Welcome

The Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Susan Fazackerley MBE welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new Internal Affairs Scrutiny Committee within the new governance structure. Councillor Fazackerley also outlined the procedure for the meeting of the new Committee.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

Councillor Peter Collins declared a personal interest in item 5 in that he was a member of the Planning Committee. Clarification was sought from Tracy Manning, Deputy Chief Executive in relation to interests in item 5. No further interests were declared on this occasion.

3. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 23 (c):

Councillor Peter Collins substituted for Councillor Kelly Farrington.

Scrutiny Items

4. Use of Residential Premises as Children's Care Homes

The Chairman invited Mr Mark Evans, Head of Planning to introduce the report. Mr Evans advised that the Planning Committee at a meeting held on 5 April 2023, had requested that the regulations of children's homes be considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee due to an increase in the number of applications received for 'Certificates of Lawful Use'.

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The Planning Committee had requested that a review of the controls available to various public bodies involved in the regulation of such premises be undertaken to ensure adequate controls were in place via Planning or other methods.

Mr Evans further advised that during the previous two years, the Council had received 25 applications across the Borough for certificates of lawful use which sought to establish whether planning permission was required to use a residential property as a children's care home.

The Committee was requested to consider the Scrutiny Review Scoping Report, as appended to the report, relating to the use of premises as residential children's homes to agree the scope of the review.

Mr Evans advised of the rationale of the scoping template that as planning permission was not always required to change the use of a residential dwelling to a children's care home, concern had been expressed that residential children's homes were being established in an uncontrolled and uncoordinated manner across the Borough. Mr Evans also highlighted the objectives of the review which were set out in the Review Scoping Template.

Mr Evans also highlighted the proposed methodology which included an invitation to key stakeholders to make representations to members of the Scrutiny Committee leading to recommendations being made to the Executive Committee and/or partner agencies for consideration. A list of suggested stakeholders to be invited to provide evidence to the Committee was also outlined within the Scoping Template.

The committee was also asked to consider if it would be appropriate to invite a lead member to become involved in the scrutiny process.

Following presentation of the report, the Chairman invited questions and comments from the Committee.

Councillor Jayne Nixon addressed the committee and suggested a children's care home business owner be invited to give evidence in any review.

A discussion took place in which the requirement for such homes to be integrated into the local community without having a detrimental impact on established communities was acknowledged. A committee member warned against pre-judgement in relation to this issue and stressed that the scrutiny process should produce a balanced view considering objective information.

A committee member referred to the difficulties experienced by ward councillors when attempting to liaise with organisations such as Ofsted and Lancashire County Council Social Services due to confidentiality issues.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED that:

- 1. A Task and Finish Group be established to review the issue of the use of residential premises as children's care homes; and**
- 2. The following to be Members of the Task and Finish Group – Councillors, Dixon, Little, Pitman, Willder and Kirkham.**

5. Planning Peer Review – Draft Action Plan

The Chairman invited Mr Mark Evans, Head of Planning to introduce the report. Mr Evans advised the Committee that as part of the process of the continuous review, the Planning Advisory Service ('PAS') had been invited to contribute a peer review team to look at the work of the Plannings Service.

The PAS had undertaken a review for three days in 2022, which had looked at the processes operated by the planning team at Fylde which had included attending a meeting of the Planning Committee and spoken with a number of key stakeholders, individually and in groups who were regularly involved in the planning application process, such as town and parish Councils.

Following the review, a report had been received from the PAS team which was considered by a meeting of the Planning Committee. Following presenting of the PAS report to the Planning Committee, a draft action plan had

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been produced which was appended to the report for information. As part of a consultation and feedback process, a mixed range of views had been expressed relating to the plan regarding the proposed objectives and process of achieving the proposed objectives within the plan.

Mr Evans explained that the recent changes to the Governance structure of the Council and the establishment of the Scrutiny Committees had provided an opportunity for the draft action plan to be subject to the scrutiny process.

Mr Evans referred to the Scrutiny Review Scoping Template which was also appended to the report which set out the rationale for undertaking the review of the plan and the objectives of the review which were to ensure that the plan adequately addressed the recommendations of the Peer Review Team and, to ensure that the Planning Action Plan was implemented in a transparent, efficient, and effective manner having regard to the differing views expressed by stakeholders.

Mr Evans highlighted to the Committee and apologised for an error within the report at page 22 that the comments attributed to Councillor Gordon Smith of Treales, Roseacre and Wharles Parish Council were the comments that should have been attributed to Councillor Karen Buckley, Leader of Fylde Council.

The scoping template also outlined the proposed methodology/approach advising that a scrutiny spotlight review could be an appropriate mechanism through which to review the action plan and would avoid any delay in the plan's implementation.

Mr Evans further referred to the importance of the review of the action plan, monitoring of delivery of the plan and some of the imminent due deadline dates as detailed in the draft action plan which had been suggested by the Planning Service. Mr Evans acknowledged that it may be necessary to amend some of the suggested deadline dates due to the passage of time since the draft plan was considered by the Planning Committee.

Following presentation of the report, the Chairman invited questions and comments from the Committee which were around the suggestion of a spotlight review to consider the draft action plan following amendments to the plan by Mr Evans and Planning Officers considering and reflecting the views that had been expressed during the consultation process of the draft plan. Members felt that an abbreviated spotlight review could focus on suggested changes to the Action Plan in light of the consultation comments which could be undertaken by the Head of Planning in advance of a further review by members. This would also provide the Head of Planning with an opportunity to revise dates within the Action Plan for review. It was also suggested that a group of Members be appointed to further review this work via an abbreviated spotlight review and in order to expediate issues those recommendations be made directly to the Executive Committee on this matter.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED that the Internal Affairs Scrutiny Committee recommend that:

- 1. Mr Evans reviews the comments received as part of the consultation process set against the draft action plan; and**
- 2. If considered necessary, makes amendments to the draft plan, and;**
- 3. Amends the dates as detailed within the Scrutiny Review Scoping Template to reflect a realistic current timeframe; and following the above process**
- 4. A group of identified Members of the Committee (Councillors Damian Buckley, Griffiths, Kirkham, Redcliffe and Fazackerley) review the amended action plan via an abbreviated spotlight review; and**
- 5. The group make recommendations to the Executive Committee with regard to the proposed final draft action plan.**
- 6. Car Parking Update on Resident Permit Scheme**

The Chairman invited Mr Andrew Loynd, Technical Support Officer to introduce the report which provided the Committee with an annual update on the Fylde Residents' Permit Scheme which had been set up in 2014 to provide residents with an opportunity to park on the car parks for a nominal fee throughout the year. The original aim had been to utilise the long-stay car parks although since that time the scheme had been developed and expanded.

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Outlined in the report at Table 1 were details of the number of permits and reissued permits that had been purchased since the scheme began. Table 1 showed that the number of permits issued had increase ear year with many existing customers renewing permits and new customers increasing.

The Committee was advised that during the Pilot Year all permits had expired on 30 April 2015 irrespective of when they had been purchased. Subsequently it had been agreed that the scheme should be made permanent with the conditions slightly adjusted. This scheme been promoted in the Council Tax leaflet sent to all Fylde Borough Residents in mid-March 2015, which had resulted in many applicants for the revised scheme over the following weeks. The scheme had been promoted in subsequent Council Tax leaflets, car park tickets and social media each year since which had resulted in the further increase in applications. It was reported that the middle of March each year was used to define each annual period for comparison purposes and that the scheme had been refined and expanded in 2016/17 and 202/21.

The Committee was further advised that the annual charge was £20.83 (£25 inc. VAT), replacement £12.50 (£15inc. VAT) and that the charge had not been increased since the scheme had been introduced in 2014. Income from the scheme was outlined in the report at Table 2.

It was reported that prior to the start of the COVID pandemic, the number of permit holders had increased year-on-year. The number of new permits had significantly dropped during the first year of the pandemic (2020/21) though renewals had remained at a similar level. As lockdown and social distancing measures had reduced in 2021/22, the number of new permits had increased to slightly above pre-pandemic levels.

It was further reported that when annual user numbers reached 1000, the Committee had requested to review the scheme.

Following presentation of the report, the Chairman invited questions from Members which were around the issue of breakdown numbers of fines imposed for licence holders who went over the allocated times and income received by the Council due to the fines.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED that the Internal Affairs Scrutiny Committee accepts the Car Parking Update on Resident Permit Scheme Report.

7. Year End Performance 2022/23

The Chairman invited Mr Alex Scrivens, Corporate Performance and Engagement Manager to introduce the report which provided details of the key performance outcomes for the full fiscal year 2022/23.

Areas of performance above target were outlined within the report. A commentary was provided to explain why progress had exceeded target including details of how this would be maintained. Areas of performance below target were also outlined within the report. Commentary was also provided to explain why performance was currently not on target, with details of any corrective action. Appended to the report were details of the full year's performance (2022-2023).

Mr Scrivens advised that the targets would go through a rigorous process of realignment of target setting and explained that due to unforeseen times such as Covid, figures for website hits had fluctuated. Mr Scrivens highlighted to the Committee that the majority of performance measures were on target.

Following presentation of the report, the Chairman invited questions from Members which were around moving targets up in areas when performance had exceeded targets to ensure to always strive to do better. It was clarified to the Committee that targets were reviewed on an annual basis although targets had not been reviewed during the Covid period and performance reporting had not been captured during that period.

It was highlighted to the Committee that PM117 (Number of households with prevention duty assisted to source alternative accommodation owed was 75 and last year's comparison figure was 49, the target was 40) as detailed in the Performance Below Target section was incorrect (page 39). Mr Scrivens apologised for the error and advised that the details would be checked.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED that the Internal Affairs Scrutiny Committee accepts the Year End Performance Report.

The meeting finished at 7.40pm.

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