



Date	Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2007
Venue	Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Committee members	Karen Buckley (Chairman) Bill Thompson (Vice-Chairman)  Brenda Ackers; Christine Akeroyd; Maxine Chew; Tony Ford; Craig Halewood; Elizabeth Oades; Thomas Threlfall;
Other Councillors	David Chedd; Trevor Fiddler; Kath Harper; Ken Hopwood; Linda Nulty; Barbara Pagett; Elaine Silverwood; Roger Small
Officers	Ian Curtis; Paul Drinnan; Mark Evans; Tracy Scholes; Stephen Smith; Paul Walker; Annie Womack; Vivien Wood
Others	Members of the public

### 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. Councillor Small declared a prejudicial interest in item 4 on the agenda, the Call-in Request - Growth Point Bid, as a member of the Cabinet making the decision in question and attended the meeting only to give evidence at the request of the Committee.

### 2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Policy and Service Review Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

### 3. Substitute members

The following substitutions were reported under council procedure rule 22.3:

Cllr Christine Akeroyd for Cllr Fabian Craig-Wilson  
Cllr Brenda Ackers for Cllr John Prestwich  
Cllr Maxine Chew for Cllr Peter Collins  
Cllr Craig Halewood for Cllr Cheryl Little

#### 4. Call-in Request - Growth Point Bid

The request related to item 3 on the agenda of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 November 2007, relating to the decision of the Cabinet to support in principle the Growth Point Bid.

Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) explained the background to the item and made reference to the call-in procedure. It was confirmed that the call-in request was valid, having met the relevant criteria. Ian Curtis advised that the correct protocols had been observed in the decision for matter to go before Cabinet as an urgent item. Councillor Buckley clarified that the committee's remit was to consider whether the decision taken was in the interests of the residents of Fylde. Members of the public were advised that should they wish, they would be given an opportunity to speak, as would non-committee councillors who were present.

Councillor Elizabeth Oades was invited to speak as the lead councillor of the group requesting the call-in. Councillor Oades had requested that the matter should be debated by full Council, as the bid would have a profound effect on the future strategic planning of Fylde, and would remove responsibility for setting planning policy from this Council to a joint executive.

Councillor Mrs Oades explained the reason for submitting the call-in and outlined her belief that this was a strategic policy matter and that accordingly full Council should have dealt with it, not Cabinet. She also queried why this matter had been treated as an urgent matter for Cabinet, when in her view there had been ample time to call a special meeting of the Council.

She voiced her concerns that this bid could lead to a single housing strategy for the Fylde coast and that decisions could be taken affecting the Fylde without our knowledge or consent. Councillor Mrs Oades pointed out that the bid depends heavily on Fylde land to provide housing regeneration, but it was unlikely that the benefits would come to us. She asked that the bid be referred to Planning Policy Scrutiny Committee for full consideration, and from there to full council.

Councillor Roger Small (Portfolio Holder for Development and Regeneration), invited to respond by the Chairman explained that the request for support for the bid had not been received until mid-October and that there had been a meeting of the Growth Point Bid group scheduled for 16 November. Since the group was going ahead with the bid anyway it was felt to be imperative that Fylde voiced its support in principle so that we could be involved in the process. Therefore the item had to be placed as an urgent item on the Cabinet meeting which took place on 14 November. Councillor Small stressed that the decision to support the bid in principle intended the protection of the interests of Fylde residents, that consultation is built into the proposals, that we need to be involved so that we can have influence on those developments which may be within our boundaries, and that Fylde BC will remain as the planning authority.

There was a full debate during which Councillor Mrs Oades expressed her view that in future, all members of the Council must be informed by e-mail of any urgent items

going to any meeting of the Council, prior to those meetings taking place, and that full supporting documents should also be provided. The committee agreed that this would be good practice and should be adopted. The committee RESOLVED:

1. Not to call-in the decision, on the grounds that it had been taken in the best interests of the residents of Fylde.
2. To recommend, however, that the matter be heard by the Planning Policy Scrutiny Committee.
3. That Cabinet and officers be requested to give more cognisance of the need to give due notice of items within its Forward Plan and for the use of urgent items to be minimised.

## 5. Visitor Economy Strategy

The Council's previous Tourism Strategy expired at the end of 2006 and the committee was asked to consider the findings of the pre-strategy diagnostic for a proposed new Visitor Economy Strategy and to make recommendations prior to the drafting of the final strategy.

Several officers from the Strategic Planning and Development Business Unit, including Paul Walker the Executive Manager, gave a presentation to the committee.

The presentation was comprehensive and some of the main topics it dealt with were:

- The achievements under the previous strategy
- The value of a strategy
- The projects covered by the proposed strategy, including Northwest Coastal Trail; rural development; classic resort concept and Open golf 2012.
- The organisations that Fylde deals with, including those that are a conduit for funding
- The image and perception of the Fylde and the importance of marketing and events.
- The drivers for change including the need for more funding from a number of sources such as council budgets, public sector grants and private sector funding.

Committee members had several questions for the presenting officers, mostly concerning the cost and the resources available to implement such a strategy should it be approved. Mr Walker explained that although the formulation of the strategy was within existing resources, to implement it would require funds from a variety of

sources, and that we must have Council-approved documentation to show our ambitions for the visitor economy and the visitor experience in Fylde in order to obtain funding.

The committee RESOLVED:

1. To acknowledge the importance of the visitor economy
  2. To endorse the approach proposed to deliver the Visitor Economy Strategy
  3. To recommend the preparation of a Visitor Economy Strategy for consideration within the next 6 months
  4. To recommend that Cabinet consider the strategic importance of the visitor economy, and the resources needed to put it in place, when it next reviews the Corporate Plan
  5. To recommend that officers progress the policies and initiatives presented; and
  6. To request regular updates on the progress of the strategy and individual projects.
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6. Application fees in respect of complaints under Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (High Hedges)

In 2005 legislation was introduced to allow councils to deal with complaints regarding high hedges, permitting them to charge for the service but not prescribing an appropriate fee.

Policy and Service Review Scrutiny committee considered the matter in July 2005, and recommended that a fee in common with neighbouring authorities should be set, with no concession for persons on low income, and requested that it should be reviewed in the future.

Mr Mark Evans (Development Control Manager) presented the report. He pointed out that in the past 2 years there have only been 3 valid complaints, but even this limited number has allowed officers to develop a better understanding of the time consuming nature of these complaints, in particular for assessing applications, monitoring remedial notices and appeals. He therefore recommended that the fee should remain unchanged. However, other local authorities have introduced lower charges for persons in receipt of some means tested benefits and asked the committee to consider whether they would like to recommend a similar scale in Fylde.

Mr Evans also pointed out that there could be scope for refunding part fees where remedial notices had not been served because the hedge owner had taken remedial action after initial approaches.

The committee enquired whether those paying the fee could claim it back by any other means. Mr Evans explained that Local Authorities should not become embroiled in such actions though there are mechanisms available to complainants privately.

The committee RESOLVED:

1. To recommend that the basic application fee in regard to high hedge applications remain unchanged at £450.00
2. To recommend that a fee of £250.00 be introduced for applicants/householders who can demonstrate that they are receiving housing benefit, council tax benefit, income support or pension credit.
3. That the policy be reviewed in two years time (or earlier if necessary) and that the issue of potential refunds also be examined at that time.

## 7. Notice of Motion - Christmas Trees

Full Council on 26th November considered a Notice of Motion to consider the apparent inequalities in funding the Christmas illuminations in all parts of the borough. After the motion had been proposed by Councillor Silverwood and seconded by Councillor Chew the mayor indicated that he would allow the motion to stand referred to the Policy and Service Review Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The Chairman invited Cllr Elaine Silverwood to make representations. Cllr Silverwood stated when she had asked for information regarding the funding of Christmas illuminations the information she had been given was not clear. She asked that the committee should require a breakdown of funding across the Borough, and the total amount being spent.

Councillor Oades added that she felt that there should be transparency in the matter and that it should be made clear what contributions were made by the various Town and Parish Councils.

The committee RESOLVED:

1. That the committee includes an item in its future workplan to examine in more detail how Christmas trees and illuminations are provided across the borough, how these are funded and whether the current arrangements can be improved.

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