

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD AT NELSON TOWN HALL
ON 29TH OCTOBER 2024**

PRESENT –

Councillor C. Church (Chair)

Councillors

*R. Anwar
D. Cockburn-Price
D. Gallear
S. Land
K. McGladdery
M. Stone
Y. Tennant*

Also in attendance

Councillor S. Cockburn-Price

Officers in attendance

*Sarah Astin-Wood Head of Policy and Commissioning
Lynne Rowland Committee Administrator*

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. Ammer.)



6. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded of the requirements of the Member Code of Conduct concerning the declaration of interests and that whipping declarations were also required.

7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

8. MINUTES

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2024, which include the Committee’s agreed work programme 2024/25, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- (2) That two further reviews be added to the Committee’s work programme as follows -
 - Member Code of Conduct – to look at how the Code is implemented and applied in meetings and how the hearings process is carried out for breaches of the Code. This to be carried out by a Task and Finish Group comprising of all members of the Committee and led by Councillor D. Gallear.

- Member Development – to consider progress against the findings of the Value for Money Audit in relation to Member behaviour and determine whether further training should be provided.

9. PENDLE COUNCIL STAFF SURVEY

Further to a review of the results of the staff survey being included in the Committee's work programme, the Head of Policy and Commissioning attended the meeting and presented the information.

It was explained that Pendle Council staff surveys were carried out every two years. The latest survey had been conducted in March/April 2024 by PS Research and the findings, which included comparisons with three other authorities, had been presented to the Council's Corporate Management Team in May.

The survey included a range of questions and statements about the organisation for respondents to comment on. Within the presentation, the percentage response of each service area was provided for each individual statement. It was noted that the overall response rate, at 66%, was down from 72% in 2022 and lower than the previous three surveys. The low response rate was particularly noticeable for waste collection, recycling and street cleaning staff, at just 28%. It was acknowledged that it had been easier to get a response from office-based staff and was suggested that, for future surveys, time could be set aside for staff in Operational Services.

The survey also allowed for comments.

A summary of the areas included and responses given was provided as follows -

- **whether the Council was a good organisation to work for** – 3 in 4 employees felt it was a good organisation to work for, which was up on 2022. However, the Council's Net Promoter Score (NPS) was lower than other local councils, with 2 in 5 being detractors of the organisation.
- **whether succession plans were being put in place** – respondents were split on this.
- **overall communication at the Council** – views had not changed since 2022 with half of employees agreeing that overall communication at the Council was good. This increased to 68% when referring to information on the issues that directly affected them. The key themes within comments for improving communication was to improve communication between teams, improve staff briefings, and listen to staff more/act on feedback.
- **what was important to staff in their employment** – flexible working was more important than anything else to staff.
- **what staff liked best about working for the Council** – 102 comments were received, with the most common themes being colleagues, flexible working, and the job itself.
- **what would staff change about working for the Council** – 94 comments were received, with the most common themes being systems/working conditions, more staff and better pay.
- **job satisfaction** – overall, job satisfaction was up, this being higher amongst line managers. However, 2 in 5 respondents did not feel that the pay they received was fair for the job they did.
- **learning and development opportunities** – 2 of 4 statements relating to learning and development had improved on 2022. Seven in 10 employees agreed that their manager encouraged their development. It was noted that the post of Learning and Development Officer transferred from Liberata to the Council earlier this year and the post had been filled recently.
- **health and wellbeing** – staff were more positive about health and wellbeing at the Council. Stress levels remained, although the workforce was split in terms of feeling stressed as a result

of work. The key themes within the comments were high workloads, staffing levels and experience, and lack of understanding/support.

- **agile working** – the majority of employees agreed that agile working worked for them and most respondents did not think that agile working had a negative impact on services. Close to 3 in 5 employees worked from home at least once a week and 45% worked from home 2 – 3 days a week. It was noted that there was a statutory duty to consider requests to work from home full time.
- **the most important things in your employment** – flexible working was more important than anything else to staff, followed by the working relationship with colleagues.
- **what gets in the way of doing the job well** – this differed by directorate, but time and the right equipment/software were reported as being one of the biggest things getting in the way of people doing their job well.
- **management** – feedback on the job that line managers were doing was positive, but line managers were more stressed and were less likely to feel the Council was a good organisation to work for. In addition, less than half of managers felt they were encouraged to develop their management skills and over half felt that having the time to do their job well was an issue. Fairness and consistency of Heads of Service had improved.
- **HR Services** – The key themes within the 12 comments received included helpful and approachable and that they responded to requests when needed, but there was still a view that they needed to provide clearer advice/information. Seven in 10 managers were satisfied with HR policy support.

Thirty-seven respondents had taken the opportunity to leave final comments, almost half of which were positive, including that it was a good place to work, friendly colleagues, job security, and flexible working practices. However, other comments mentioned low morale, unmanageable workload, and that senior management needed to be more visible, more transparent and make better decisions.

During and following the presentation, the Head of Policy and Commissioning took questions from Members and, in response, provided information on actions being taken to address any highlighted issues.

It was noted that, although the Management Team felt that the overall response was positive, some next steps had been identified/taken place.

It was reported that a staff awards scheme had taken place this year, but there had been mixed feedback. There had also been little enthusiasm for a communications workshop, with only one person signing up to it. Instead, a 'how we communicate' poster had been developed and would be shared to outline the varied communication methods at the Council. A staff suggestion scheme had operated in the past and it was commented that this might be useful to encourage continuous improvement.

Since the staff survey, PS Research had conducted an IT satisfaction survey, the results of which were currently being collated. It had also been organised that the Local Government Authority (LGA) would carry out a Digital Peer Review. Peers would visit the Council and talk with staff to understand its digital processes and systems and how they could be improved. This would result in a report with recommendations which would help to drive the new IT Strategy. A Customer Contact Strategy was also being developed which would focus on how people contacted the Council and how the Council could best use digital solutions to make this as efficient and effective as possible, both for the customer and for staff.

A development day had taken place with all managers (Extended Management Team) to help respond to the feedback from the staff survey and support managers. A management development programme was now planned to support managers further in the areas of learning they identified and to provide managers with regular opportunities for development and peer support.

One Committee member referred to changes to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance and the need to carry out mental health risk assessments. Checks would be made against the guidance to ensure it was being followed.

In order to look at the results in more detail, it was agreed that the slides would be circulated to Members of the Committee to allow for further consideration by Members.

10. REVIEWS OF BULKY HOUSEHOLD WASTE COLLECTION AND REPLACEMENT WASTE CONTAINERS

It was reported that the Task and Finish Group on bulky household waste collection and replacement waste containers had concluded its review. The minutes of the Group's meeting, which provided a summary of the information considered, were submitted for information and included recommendations for approval.

RESOLVED

(1) That the Task and Finish Group's recommendations relating to bulky household waste collection be agreed and the Executive be recommended to approve the following -

(i) That a stepped charging mechanism for bulky household waste collections be introduced as follows –

Number of Items	Minimum Charge
1 – 4	£13.50
5 – 8	£27.00
9 – 12	£40.50

(ii) That persons in receipt of housing or council tax benefits be eligible for a discount of 50%.

(iii) That it be acknowledged that there may be a cost to developing or amending current software solutions to accommodate the introduction of charges for bulky household waste collections, but that this would be outweighed by future savings.

(iv) That promotion of hubs and charities accepting used household products be increased.

(2) That the Task and Finish Group's recommendations relating to replacement waste containers, numbered (i) to (v) below, be agreed, together with the additional condition numbered (vi) below and the Executive be recommended to approve the following -

(i) That a charge of £25 + VAT be introduced for administration and delivery of all replacement wheeled bins.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (27.10.2024)

- (ii) That an additional charge of £20 + VAT be introduced for the purchase of a grey refuse (non-recycling) bin.
- (iii) That no additional charge be introduced for the purchase of brown, blue and green recycling bins and this message be clearly advertised.
- (iv) That all charges recommended at (i) and (ii) above be discounted by 50% for persons in receipt of housing or council tax benefits.
- (v) That it be accepted that communal bins would not be a viable option and the option not be pursued, but that advice be supplied to new developers where possible.
- (vi) That the potential of placing an identity chip in the bins, containing the allocated address, be explored.

11. PENDLE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Members were reminded that, as part of the review of the Pendle Community Safety Partnership (CSP) consideration was being given to the benefits, or otherwise, of joining the wider Pennine CSP. The Committee had previously agreed that there would be some benefit in attending a meeting of the Pennine CSP to observe the proceedings. The Chair therefore attended its September meeting and reported back on his observations.

The Chair reported that he recognised that there were benefits to representatives from all areas meeting as a single unit. However, he had noticed that many of the matters discussed were very local, with people in each area having specific knowledge. He had concerns that some of this would get lost if brought into the wider group.

The Committee was reminded of the information presented to the March meeting and the discussion that had taken place, particularly in relation to the resources required to facilitate a separate CSP. At the last meeting of the Committee it was reported that changes to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Tools and Powers and reporting requirements to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) were part of the Criminal Justice Bill that was awaiting Report Stage and Third Reading. This had not progressed any further and the process and timing on this was still uncertain.

It was explained that, should the Council join the Pennine CSP, local focus could continue, but the statutory functions would move to the Pennine CSP. Resources across the patch could be shared and it would allow access to funding opportunities, along with knowledge and expertise.

RESOLVED

That the Head of Policy and Commissioning be asked to submit a report to the next meeting of this Committee providing further information on the potential impact of the Council joining the Pennine Community Safety Partnership.

12. EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME/FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Work Programme and Forward Plan for the four-month period commencing 1st November 2024 was submitted for consideration.

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Members commented on the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme update that was due to be submitted to a future meeting of the Executive. Some members of the Committee had knowledge of the Programme in alternative roles and reported on their experiences. One Member reported that some children had been allocated to unsuitable activities as special educational needs had not been identified on booking. A further Member reported that there had been an issue with the booking system, where some bookings had doubled up. Colne Youth Action Group, a participant in the HAF programme, had been asked to write a case study based on its participation in the Programme. This had been submitted to the HAF coordinator at Pendle Council.

Members asked that this information be taken into account when producing the update report for the Executive.

CHAIR _____