

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2011 at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillors: John Batt, John Fox, Tony Hall (Chairman), Brian Marshall, John Marshall (as substitute for Bill Houlst), Joe Plant, Peter Popple, John Savage, Melva Steckles, Helen Swiers, Herbert Tindall,

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: Alex Bird.

In attendance: Executive Portfolio Holder County Councillor Chris Metcalfe and County Councillor John Clark

Officers: Julie Blaisdale (Assistant Director Library & Community Services), Ray Busby (Corporate Development Officer, Chief Executives Group), Carole Dunn and Josie O'Dowd (Legal & Democratic Services), Debbie Hogg (Assistant Director (Resources), Adult & Community Services), Derek Law (Corporate Director, Adult & Community Services)

Apologies were received from County Councillors Dave Peart and Pat Marsburg.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

84. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March and 4 April 2011, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

85. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

The Committee was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting.

86. MOTION – CLOSURE OF LIBRARIES

CONSIDERED –

The joint report by the Scrutiny Team Leader and Manager of Democratic Services.

This report asks the Committee to:-

- (a) note the information in this report
- (b) consider whether it wishes to make a recommendation to the Executive that the motion set out below be supported: or be supported subject some amendment; or be opposed.

The Committee heard from the mover of the motion, County Councillor John Clark, who tabled an additional paper on the day. His position was that in the absence of detailed proposals since the closure of the consultation exercise, his suggestions and financial calculations merited consideration.

The Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director responded. Although the consultation had finished at the end of February, more time than originally expected was being taken to distil the encouraging number of responses and constructive comments received. In this context what people said during the consultation process was important -

- i. People encouraged the County Council to take more time to consider the proposals and hence the decision to invest in the service in the current financial year to “buy time”.
- ii. The Council should consider alternative and imaginative income generation, for example, revising the charging scheme.
- iii. “Fairness”; the whole service might share the difficulties and “pain” associated with the proposals.
- iv. There should be a further re-examination to reduce operational costs, particularly at Head Office.

At the meeting, County Councillor Clark highlighted specific elements of his proposals, focussing particularly on the mobile service. He quoted the proposal to reduce deliveries to once a month as an example of action that would reduce costs in the current year.

Members appreciated Councillor Clark’s commitment and interest towards Libraries. However, some Members expressed disappointment that the motion had not been withdrawn once it was known the proposals drawing conclusions from the consultation exercise would not be submitted. A Member added that whilst County Councillor Clark’s calculations added up in strict financial terms, it was just not possible to assess their service impact meaningfully.

Whilst it was accepted practice to process a motion within one meeting cycle and if the Committee had not met, the Council would be considering our views after the Executive had decided; there was still a sense amongst Members that debate on the issue was premature and the expense of a Committee meeting might have been avoided.

RESOLVED –

After listening to the various points put forward the Committee believed that consideration of this issue was premature and therefore did not support the motion.

87. Urgent Item

The Chairman decided the following matter could be considered as a matter of urgency for the reasons stated.

88. PLANNING MATTER: EXTRA CARE DEVELOPMENT, SKIPTON

To advise Members of recent developments regarding a planning application for extra care development in Skipton.

Alex Bird invited the Director to comment on recent media and public speculation regarding the proposed extra care development at Skipton.

The Director responded that the developers, Randall Construction (the applicants) had been working collaboratively with the planning department on the details after submission. He was still optimistic that a positive solution and outcome would be reached.

The applicants were meeting the Architects in the next few days to address the issues which had been raised locally. There was every reason to be confident that the application could be successfully resubmitted to the Planning Committee with appropriate changes which would compromise neither the quality nor cost of the project. This was the applicant's risk not the Directorate's. The Director remarked he was delighted to see a letter from the local Age UK Group supporting the application making supportive, constructive and enlightened comments about the benefits to the community of the development.

RESOLVED –

That the Director, wherever possible, advise Members regarding the progress of the extra care development application at Skipton in order that they may assist its progress.

The meeting concluded at 12:30 pm.

RB