

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 22 April 2013 at 10.30 am.

### **Present:-**

County Councillor Liz Casling in the Chair.

County Councillors Val Arnold, Karl Arthur, Bernard Bateman, Helen Grant, Neville Huxtable David Jeffels, Andrew Lee, Stephen Shaw and Geoff Webber.

In attendance:

County Councillor Carl Les.

Officers:

Justine Brooksbank (Central Services), Helen Edwards (Central Services), Lesley Ingleson (CYPS), Rob Polkinghorne (Central Services), Lorraine Laverton (Central Services) and Jonathan Spencer (Central Services).

Present by Invitation:

Ian Guest (South Yorkshire Credit Union)

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Phil Barrett, John McCartney and Brian Simpson.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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### **114. Minutes**

#### **Resolved –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2013, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **115. Public Questions or Statements**

There were no public questions or statements to be put to the Committee.

### **116. Executive Member's Progress Report**

Considered –

The report of Executive Member County Councillor Carl Les highlighting some of the recent issues considered by the Executive since the last meeting of the Committee and identifying some of the key issues and priorities for the coming months.

The issues reported by Councillor Les were as follows:

- Police & Crime Panel:

The Panel had responded to the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) draft Policing Plan. The Panel's suggestions for inclusion for improvement had been taken into account in the finalised plan. These included the importance of not neglecting Neighbourhood Watch and other Watch Schemes; and supporting businesses. The next meeting of the Panel to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> April would take the form of the first confirmation hearing whereby the Panel would be asked to approve the PCC's choice of Chief Constable, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Finance Officer. Recent articles in the press based upon a press statement released by the PCC's office had given the impression that this would be a rubber-stamping process. This would not be the case and the Panel had the right of veto. The Panel was now politically balanced again with the appointment of Helen Flynn, a Liberal Democrat Councillor on Harrogate Borough Council.

- Future issues:

- Approving the project to work in partnership with Selby District Council on closer collaboration of service delivery. Areas included Customer Services and some back office services such as finance. This way of working could prove to be a model that could be rolled out to other districts in the county.
- Publishing statutory notices on-line and improving the website more generally to make it more customer friendly
- Improving the format of the quarterly performance monitoring reports
- Video conferencing: Currently users of the equipment were encountering repeated technical problems. If the Council was serious in using video conferencing it would need to ensure that in future it was fit for purpose.
- Paperless communications and Members' ICT needs: A report would be going to the Executive shortly with the proposal to replace the existing laptops with tablets.
- Area Committees: implementing improved arrangements, though the detail had yet to be finalised.

Councillor Les went on to state that it had been a privilege to be held to account by, but also significantly, work with the Corporate & Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee over the past four years. The Chairman thanked Councillor Les for his attendance at the Committee during this time and in particular for reporting back to the Committee in a timely manner about issues arising within his Portfolio.

Members made the following comments:

- A Member commented upon the public disquiet about the severance package of the former Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police, Grahame Maxwell. He went on to note that since then there had been a couple of instances elsewhere in the country where Chief Constables had departed under controversial circumstances and yet had also received generous pay settlements. The North Yorkshire Police Authority had at the time stated that it had had to follow national police regulations when determining the severance package of Mr Maxwell. He went on to ask if under the new PCC arrangements this situation had been addressed so that the same situation would not happen again. Councillor Les said that this was for the PCC to address and he would put this question to her at the Police and Crime Panel's confirmation hearing. He added that whilst the new Chief Constable would be eligible to be a member of the Chief Police Officers Staff Association, the fees

would be paid out of the Chief Constable's salary and not by North Yorkshire Police.

- A member said that he was concerned that the PCC's preferred candidate for Chief Constable, Dave Jones, had a reputation for closing rural police stations in his current role of Assistant Chief Constable for the rural region of Northern Ireland. County Councillor Les agreed to raise this issue at the Police and Crime Panel's confirmation hearing. He noted that the higher cost of rural policing was a cost that should sometimes be borne in order to protect rural communities in the county.

#### **Resolved –**

That the Executive Member's update be noted.

### **117. South Yorkshire Credit Union**

#### **Covering report of the Corporate Development Officer**

Considered –

The covering report of the Corporate Development Officer and oral report of the Chief Officer of South Yorkshire Credit Union (SYCU), providing the Committee with an overview and opportunity to seek clarification on South Yorkshire Credit Union's plans and business strategy for North Yorkshire.

Ian Guest, Chief Officer South Yorkshire Credit Union provided an overview of SYCU. He said that the ethos of SYCU was to serve the financially excluded, providing savings and small affordable loans with advice. The Credit Union offered face-to-face services. His background of working for the Citizens Advice Bureaux had taught him the importance of providing face-to-face services in order to get to know individual customers' needs.

Ian Guest went on to note that a big challenge was to mitigate some of the effects of Welfare Reform, particularly as Universal Credit claimants would receive payments monthly in arrears. He explained about the work already being done with private and social landlords to ensure that rents would be paid. Budgeting accounts were being introduced allowing priority bills to be paid. These accounts were supported with budgeting support and advice. In relation to the rollout of Universal Credit, SYCU was working with the Cabinet Office to help deliver the 'Digital by Default' agenda.

The North Yorkshire business plan was based upon replicating the Credit Union's sustainable business model in South Yorkshire of focusing upon areas of higher deprivation and population levels. Scarborough and York had therefore been chosen as the target areas in the county. Later this would include Selby and then Harrogate. Branch offices had opened at the start of the year in Scarborough and York. New computer software had been installed to allow SYCU to expand its service and develop new products such as online banking. The Credit Union was aiming to do work in schools and children's centres to try and ensure young people and parents developed a savings ethos. It was also aiming to offer a range of other services around money management advice and also to help small businesses by providing small business loans.

Ian Guest went on to note that Councillors could help SYCU develop by publicising the Credit Union to residents and in-house publications. North Yorkshire Councils could offer payroll deductions, promote the Credit Union through the library network

and Children's Centres, help combat illegal loan sharks, raise awareness of the high cost of Hire Purchase and Pay Day loans, and 'poverty proof' council decisions.

Members made the following comments:

- A Member commended the budgeting accounts being offered by SYCU. He noted the links that could be made between SYCU and the North Yorkshire District Councils. District Councils were projected to see an increase in the level of Council Tax arrears following the recent introduction of the localisation of Council Tax Benefit. He said that the District Councils would be interested in having further discussions with the SYCU in respect of the budgeting accounts. Another Member noted that people who had been made intentionally homeless had often got into difficulty by not paying their rent. The Credit Union's budgeting account could therefore help to mitigate this. Ian Guest explained that a pilot was being undertaken in South Yorkshire with the four local authorities there. When this pilot had been undertaken, together with the work that he was involved in with the Cabinet Office on the Digital by Default agenda, he would be happy to explore links with the district councils in North Yorkshire.
- The use of libraries as local access points for SYCU allowing credit union services to be promoted to a larger area as the former North Yorkshire Credit Union had done. Ian Guest replied that the ethos of South Yorkshire Credit Union was to provide face-to-face services so that decisions whether to award loans and other products were based on reliable information. He felt that this was where SYCU differed to the former North Yorkshire Credit Union. Many people who came to SYCU lacked financial management and other skills and there was a need to sit down with them to discuss their problems. There could be the possibility of the County Council's Customer Contact Centre advertising the Credit Union but detailed discussions had yet to be had about this. He went on to note that whilst SYCU had plenty of money to lend, providing the resources to service such a wide geographical area was an issue. The key thing was that the Credit Union developed in a sustainable way.
- The benefits of equipping children at an early age with budgeting and money management skills. Ian Guest explained about the work that the Credit Union was doing with schools in South Yorkshire on Fair trade issues and savings collection points. The Credit Union was also keen to make links with the Troubled Families Teams across local authority areas.
- The Chairman noted that North Yorkshire Credit Union had had relatively high staffing overheads, which had been exacerbated by its reliance upon short-term grant funding for projects. Ian Guest confirmed that SYCU was not and never had been reliant upon grant-funding. SYCU had received DWP Growth Fund money in the past to provide loans to Members. However this funding had been awarded on a payment by results basis. SYCU was self-sustainable and run as a business and so projects had to make themselves pay.

#### **Resolved –**

That Members note South Yorkshire Credit Union's plans and business strategy for North Yorkshire and that an update be provided to a future meeting of the Corporate & Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## 118. Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012

Considered –

The report of the Head of Youth Justice Service providing the Committee with an overview of key changes to the youth justice system brought about by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012.

Lesley Ingleson, Head of Youth Justice Service explained that the key changes introduced by the LASPO Act were around: youth sentences, by removing the current restriction on the number of referral orders or Youth Cautions that a young person could be given; remands of children other than on Bail, with the costs of keeping a young person in custody on remand being transferred to local authorities; and rehabilitation of offenders, by reducing the times when certain convictions could become spent.

Previously there had been a complex system for remand and more serious offences, which had depended upon the age and gender of the offender. Now there was a single remand framework for 12 to 17 year olds. For those Remanded in Youth Detention Accommodation, as of December these offenders had acquired 'Looked After Child' status. The County Council was now responsible for funding these placements. The funding provided by the Government for the placements did not meet the full costs. This was because it was the Government's intention that the changes in legislation would mean that fewer young people would be remanded in custody.

Lesley Ingleson went on to note that the Youth Justice Service had been working closely with Children Social Care to prepare for the changes and track the types of accommodation where young people had historically ended up in secure remand. The intention of the Youth Justice Board was to minimise the time that a young person spent in custody. The changes would mean that more young people with complex and challenging issues would remain in the community. This would bring new challenges for Children's Social with more challenging, prolific young offenders being managed in the community. Re-offending rates could increase as the use of custody fell.

Members made the following comments:

- The importance of continuing with community payback schemes as a means to stop re-offending and get people into employment. Lesley Ingleson confirmed that with every order the Youth Justice Service tried to match and link to what the victim wanted, which could include community payback.
- The need for Members to do more as Corporate Parents for Looked After Children to get them into employment. Lesley Ingleson noted that the role of Members as Corporate Parents now extended to young people Remanded in Youth Detention Accommodation.
- The compounding effect that the shortfall in Government funding to be transferred to the Local Authority for placements would have upon other cuts having to be made elsewhere in the Children and Young People's Directorate. Lesley Ingleson confirmed that it would have a significant impact. The Youth Justice Service would be undertaking a major exercise in the next six months to help reshape the service to see where additional savings could be found. These particular changes in the LASPO Act would bring added pressures for Children's Social Care.

- The work being undertaken with colleagues in the Children and Young People's Service Directorate on preventative work. Lesley Ingleson provided an overview of the early prevention work being undertaken especially with Children's Centres. This and other areas of work was encouraging closer integrated working between social service staff and the Youth Justice Team.

**Resolved –**

That Members note the key changes to the youth justice system brought about by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012.

**119. HR and Communications Unit Work Plan and Focus**

**Considered –**

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support) outlining the main focus of work relating to the HR and Communications teams.

Justine Brooksbank, Assistant Chief Executive explained that HR support around the directorate re-structures was now tailing off. The focus instead was on rolling out the new Business Support Service, which had brought together 600 staff as part of the One Council programme.

Work was also being undertaken to better align staff resources to workload and service activity in order to respond to customer demands. This was likely to involve changing employment contracts.

The changes to staff terms and conditions which commenced in 2011 were now well-embedded. The historic employment offer that local government had in the past provided to staff had changed with relative job security being no more. The new employment offer had yet to be clarified but the Council still had much to offer staff. The annual staff survey had recently been completed with over 600 responses and an update could be provided at a future meeting of the Committee.

The move towards 'self-serve' for managers around managing staffing issues was bringing about a less intensive reliance on the HR team. Developments to move all staff management processes on line were continuing.

Referring to Section 5 of the report Justine Brooksbank explained that the Council was developing an organisation wide annual Workforce Plan to assess and determine its current and future workforce needs.

A range of initiatives were in place to help young people into employment such as the apprenticeship scheme, with an increase in the number of apprentices appointed to frontline Health and Social Care roles.

Helen Edwards, Head of Communications referred to section 7 of the report. She noted that internal communication had over recent months focused upon a number of One Council changes, especially in the area of Business Support. A number of different communications channels had been used. Communication with managers across the organisation continued to be a priority. In terms of external communications the Council was continuing its partnership arrangement with Johnston Press and a major improvement of the Council's website was underway to make it more customer-friendly.

Members made the following comments:

- A Member said that he was concerned that as a Corporate Parent children leaving care seem to be provided with very limited assistance to help them find employment. Justine Brooksbank replied that the Council now guaranteed an apprenticeship place to any care leaver that wanted one. HR Services would be raising the awareness of this with the new Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services and other members of the directorate's Management Team. Justine Brooksbank went on to note that 98% of apprenticeship positions were substantive posts. All apprentices had to pass a probationary period however.
- A Member asked what level of staffing reductions had been made in recent years and what the number of full and part-time employees would be in 12 months hence. Justine Brooksbank said that the overall workforce had reduced by just over eight per cent since 2010. 700 posts had been lost but this had included fixed term contracts not being renewed and other vacancies not being filled and subsequently deleted. She went on to explain that there was a difference between the overall number of posts and the headcount. This was because some staff had more than one job with the Council. The number of posts had reduced by 1400 but this had involved posts with limited hours. The staff savings targets were detailed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Chairman noted that through her involvement in monitoring the progress of the One Council programme achieving savings was more complex than producing a crude headcount. This was because work around changing staff processes and the ways in which staff were employed was central to achieving the financial targets in the One Council programme.
- The increased use of social media by members of the public as a means of contacting the Council and the implications that this might have upon staffing. Justine Brooksbank replied that it was anticipated that additional staff would not be recruited to deal with social media enquiries. This was already co-ordinated by existing staff in the Communications Unit.

**Resolved –**

That Members note the ongoing HR and communications work plan and focus.

**120. One Council Update**

Considered –

The joint oral report of the Chairman of the One Council Members Task Group and the Organisational Change Programme Director.

Rob Polkinghorne, Organisational Change Programme Director mentioned that the Task Group had last met in February to discuss the progress on the Customer Services and Property Management workstreams, and Training and workforce planning. The Task Group would be meeting upon the rise of today's Committee meeting to be provided with an update on the Digital Strategy and the mobile working pilot. To date the overall programme had realised cashable savings of just under £5m against an overall target of £7.6m.

Members made the following comments:

- The Chairman said that further projected reductions in Government funding showed the need for the Council to make further savings. She said that she was concerned that once the One Council 'programme' came to an end this would be less easy to achieve. She also expressed concern that the post of

Organisational Change Programme Director would cease at the end in June, which could potentially slow momentum. Rob Polkinghorne explained that although his post would cease to exist the programme would be taken forward but 'mainstreamed' into everything that the Council did. There was currently no intention to increase the financial savings target allocated to One Council programme, savings would be made elsewhere.

- Whilst there would no longer necessarily be the need for the Committee to convene a One Council Members Working Group in the new Council, the principles of the One Council programme should help inform the Committee's work programme.

**Resolved –**

That the progress of the One Council programme and the work of the One Council Members Task Group be noted.

**121. Work Programme**

Considered –

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader inviting the Committee to consider the Work Programme.

Jonathan Spencer, Corporate Development Officer noted that the Committee had suggested that an update report on the South Yorkshire Credit Union be added to the work programme. He advised that a further report on the impact of the changes arising from the LAPSO Act 2012, particularly in relation to the impact upon County Council services, be brought to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However this should be in consultation with the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to see where the report would best fit.

**Resolved –**

- a) That Members note the Work Programme.
- b) That the Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the new council be asked to consider taking forward the items in the current work programme listed in Appendix 1 including an update on the South Yorkshire Credit Union.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm

JS/ALJ