

**North Yorkshire County Council**  
**Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Committee**

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 18 April 2016 at 10.30 am.

**Present:-**

County Councillor Derek Bastiman in the Chair.

County Councillors Val Arnold, Bernard Bateman MBE, John Blackburn, Jean Butterfield, Sam Cross, Helen Grant (as substitute for Stuart Parsons), Bryn Griffiths, Andrew Lee, Cliff Lunn, Tony Randerson, Steve Shaw-Wright and Tim Swales.

**Also in Attendance**

County Councillors Carl Les, Chris Metcalfe and David Chance (Executive Members).

Officers: Mary Weastell, Julie Blaisdale, Marie-Ann Jackson, Justine Brooksbank, Neil Irving, Deborah Hugill and Bryon Hunter

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Stuart Parsons.

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

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**77. Minutes**

**Resolved –**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2016, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**78. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to note.

**79. Public Questions or Statements**

There were no public questions or statements.

**80. Executive Member Update**

Considered

The oral update of County Councillor Carl Les.

Councillor Les advised the Committee that a Greater Yorkshire devolution deal is still the preferred option for North Yorkshire County Council. West Yorkshire is holding out for its plans to go forward.

In response to comments from a number of Members about the schools becoming academies Councillor Les commented that a Members' seminar was being planned.

## **Resolved -**

That the update be noted.

### **81. Update on the Reconfiguration of the Library Service**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive - Library Customer and Community Services briefing Members on progress made in communities since the last report received by this Committee on 16 November; highlighting areas of success as well as risk. The report also describes the next phase of work to be undertaken in order that communities meet the necessary criteria to enable the successful transfer of library service delivery.

Mary Weastell summarised the format of the report by highlighted the RAG rating summary and the more detailed progress position shown in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Members acknowledged that a lot of work was taking place to set up management groups.

Mary commented that the implementation date for community managed libraries to be fully operational is 1 April 2017 and highlighted that only the Stokesley library was assessed as "Red" under RAG rating summary. Pateley Bridge library was at the other end of the scale and had already gone live as a community managed library.

Members were informed that the outcome of the staff consultation which closes later this month will further inform plans for achieving full implementation by April 2017. A marketing campaign is planned for the autumn this year.

Members' questioned how libraries will be adequately staffed. Julie Blaisdale advised Members that the staff consultation would inform decisions on this aspect of the reconfiguration. Julie added that hybrid and core libraries will still need volunteers and referred to work taking place to attract and train volunteers. Julie also referred to the need to ensure there is a co-ordinated approach between drafting constitutions, producing business for libraries and recruiting volunteers so there was actually work for volunteers to carry out.

Councillor Tony Randerson expressed concern over Eastfield library, in particular, that there was no "plan B". He commented that he was fearful it would eventually close.

A number of Members commended the work of the Stronger Communities team in supporting the establishment of community managed libraries. Marie-Ann Jackson advised Members that the toolkit which the Stronger Communities team had developed was very comprehensive but acknowledged that some libraries such as Eastfield would need additional support. Facilitated development sessions may be necessary, similar to the approach that had been taken in Catterick and Colburn.

Councillor Metcalfe commented that it was an extremely positive situation. He acknowledged that there was a good deal of detailed work still required. He referred to the success of Pateley Bridge library. He acknowledged the problems at Eastfield and at Barlby and thought that these difficulties could be overcome now that there is greater resilience at the centre of the Council capable of providing the necessary support. He was confident these libraries have a long term future but this would involve looking beyond being a traditional library, including in some cases becoming community hubs.

The Chairman, Councillor Bastiman commented that in overall terms there was good reason to be optimistic in terms of achieving the reconfiguration programme.

**Resolved -**

That the progress made to date on the reconfiguration of the library service be noted.

**82. Equality**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Director - Policy and Partnerships updating Members about specific areas of practice in relation to equality within North Yorkshire County Council as requested at the Committee's mid-cycle briefing.

Neil Irving guided Members through the main aspects of his report as set out under:

- a) Progress on equal pay
- b) Monitoring and workforce data
- c) Member training on equality issues
- d) Refreshed equality objectives.

Councillor Bastiman, Chairman, commented that the Committee's role with regards to Equal Opportunities is maintain a watching brief. He also commented that the introduction of the National Living Wage (NLW) which will be paid to workers aged 25 and above and initially will be set at £7.20 an hour and eventually be increased to more than £9 an hour by 2020 will have an impact on the attractiveness of being employed and consequently on the profile of Council's workforce.

In response to Members' questions on the impact that the NLW could have on other pay grades Justine Brooksbank advised Members that the Council seeks to ensure there are appropriate differentials between grades and the potential costs must always be taken into account. Justine also referred to the fact that a national pay award is still being negotiated.

Members noted that whilst the Executive receives information on the age profile of the workforce other aspects of the equality and diversity were not so routinely monitored. One reason why this is the case is that other reported characteristics could involve seeking information on very personal information.

It was agreed that all Members should complete the e-learning package on equality and diversity on the Learning Zone as is currently the case for staff.

Members supported a refresh of the organisation's equality objectives.

**Resolved -**

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the progress on equal pay be noted.
- (c) That Members be encouraged to complete the equality e-learning package on the Learning Zone.
- (d) That a session on equality impact assessments is included in a future Members' Seminar.

### **83. Workforce Update**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support) updating the Committee on the County Council's changing workforce, presenting key workforce data and details progress on the Workforce Plan which takes the County Council workforce up to 2020.

Justine Brooksbank guided Members through the main issues in her report. Key issues that Justine highlighted included:

- The need to continue to engage with the workforce in times of constant change as part of measures to provide the necessary support.
- The need to develop talent.
- Overcoming the challenges, for instance around the recruitment and retention of social care staff.

In response to Members' questions Justine commented that the average age of the workforce is 46 years of age and the age profile had clusters in services areas.

Members noted the work being led by the Health and Wellbeing Board working across the council and the NHS to address recruitment and retentions issues being felt across all care services.

Justine highlighted how the Council monitors the length of time staff stay with the Council and how staff are encouraged to complete exit surveys, the information from which is used to inform policy.

A Member commended the work of the Council in managing the staff turnover as a result of the various re-structurings that have taken place across the organisation. Justine also drew Members' attention to the recent staff survey which demonstrates that morale is holding up well. Data on sickness and turnover also suggest morale is still good.

Members commented that the increase in pensionable age would create difficulties for all organisations seeking to bring in "fresh blood". Justine confirmed that the Council is trying to tackle these issues in an informed way by making the best use of information to inform policy.

Justine commented that the Council is aware of the implications of more schools becoming academies.

In response to Members' questions around the use of agency staff Justine commented that the Council only uses such staff to fill short term gaps, such as to deal with a sickness problem in a specific group of staff. The Council also has an internal bank of staff, for instance in social care, which provides a resource for short term relief work.

**Resolved -**

That Justine Brooksbank be thanked for her report and that the report be noted.

### **84. Work Programme**

Considered -

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader inviting comments from members on the  
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content of the Committee's programme of work scheduled for future meetings.

**Resolved -**

That the content of the work programme report and schedule be agreed.

The meeting concluded at 11.55am

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