

North Yorkshire County Council

Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 14 November 2016 at 10.30 am.

Present:-

County Councillor Derek Bastiman in the Chair.

County Councillors Val Arnold, Sam Cross, Andrew Goss, Bryn Griffiths, Andrew Lee, Cliff Lunn, Bob Packham, and Tim Swales.

Also in Attendance

Officers: Daniel Harry, Scrutiny Team Leader, Julie Blaisdale Assistant Director - Library Customer and Community Services, Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of the Stronger Communities Programme

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Tony Randerson - Cllr Bob Packham substituting, Cllr Steve Shaw Wright

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

101. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2016, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

102. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

103. Public Questions or Statements

There were no public questions or statements.

104. Executive Member Update

There was no Executive Member update.

105. Update on the Reconfiguration of the Library Service

Considered -

Report of the Julie Blaisdale Assistant Director - Library Customer and Community Services updating on the progress made in communities since the last report received by this Committee on 18 April 2016; highlighting areas of success as well as risk.

Julie Blaisdale gave an overview of progress to date with the reconfiguration of the library service, highlighting the:

- deadline for completion of the reconfiguration as being 1 April 2017
- support put in place by the Library Service and Stronger Communities to enable the transition from being a local authority managed library service to a service of 7 core libraries, 5 hybrid and 21 community managed libraries
- key role played by volunteers and the recruitment and retention processes that had been put in place
- seminars that had been run to provide information, support and guidance to management boards of the new libraries on key issues like insurance, writing business plans and running a community organisation
- progress that had been made in some areas with the development of the library into a community hub, offering a broad range of services
- progress with the re-organisation of the Council's Library Service reorganisation and the adoption of a new staffing model.

Committee Members then raised a series of questions, concerns and areas where they sought reassurance.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths queried whether the Library Service was on track to meet the £1.4 million 2020 savings target. In response, Julie Blaisdale confirmed that this was the case.

Marie-Ann Jackson stated that the Stronger Communities Team will have committed the equivalent of an estimated £150,000 worth of staff time to the reconfiguration programme over 2015/16 and 2016/17. It is anticipated that the demand for support will reduce over time but a commitment was given to providing long term support to the reconfigured libraries.

Cllrs Tim Swales stated that he had received positive feedback on the Safer Communities Team and the support that they had given to libraries in his ward.

Julie Blaisdale provided feedback on the progress with and lessons learned from phase one of the reconfiguration programme. Pateley Bridge was held up as an example of successful transition. It had seen a 10 fold increase in footfall as it had become a venue for a range of local services.

Cllr Derek Bastiman requested that Julie Blaisdale attend a future meeting of the committee, possibly 6 month's - time, with representatives from Pateley Bridge library to provide members with an insight into the journey from a local authority managed to a community led library.

Cllr Bob Packham highlighted his experience of being involved in the reconfiguration of the Sherburn Library, citing many positives but also noting that there had been avoidable delays with the transfer of the lease and the sign-off of the Service Level Agreement.

In response, Marie-Ann Jackson acknowledged some delays in the transfer of leases and sign-off of Service Level Agreements. She also responded to a range of questions relating to details of the process that a library goes through as it moves from being local authority managed to community led, as summarised below:

- A member of the Council's Property Service team has been allocated to this work to enable any issues around leases, buildings management and asset transfer to be resolved as quickly as possible
- One-off start up grants of £200 are made available to libraries to cover legal costs
- Some libraries have applied for funding in their own right, once registered with the Charities Commission
- Funding has also been made available, in some cases, by Parish Councils

- There are some basic training requirements that have to be met, such as Data Protection
- Volunteers are not required to undertake a DBS check. This is also the case for Council employed library staff
- There is a preferred supplier list that has the details of organisations that can provide specialist support to libraries.

Cllr Derek Bastiman highlighted the need to ensure that long term support is in place to the new community led libraries to help them resolve any difficulties as and when they emerge. Committee members agreed that the reconfiguration was a long term project and that volunteers needed support to ensure that, once recruited, they were retained.

Cllr Derek Bastiman thanked Julie Blaisdale and Anne-Marie Jackson for attending and for all of the work that they and their teams had done to date to help ensure that the reconfiguration of library services in the county was a success.

Resolved -

The Committee resolved to make a recommendation to Executive supporting the principle of what the libraries reconfiguration programme is seeking to achieve, detailing a number of areas in which reassurances are sought:

- that the Council will continue to provide support to community, hybrid and core libraries to enable them to recruit and retain volunteers
- that the Council will continue to provide direct support and intervention, as and when required, where community managed libraries are experiencing difficulties providing a viable service
- that there is a long term commitment to continue to provide support to the library network in its new form
- that the Committee is fully briefed on how this work is progressing.

The Committee also noted the excellent work that both the Library Service and the Stronger Communities Team have done to support communities to take on a greater role in the delivery of library services in their area. The Chairman made particular reference to the scale and complexity of the work that they had taken on and highlighted their ability to get alongside and work with volunteers and community groups to resolve problems in the early stages that would otherwise have jeopardised the reconfiguration programme.

106. Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader inviting comments from Members on the 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, subject to inclusion of the additional elements identified in discussions around preceding agenda items.

The meeting concluded at 11.30am

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