

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 19 June 2017 at 10.30 am.

### **Present:-**

County Councillor Derek Bastiman in the Chair.

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Caroline Goodrick, Bryn Griffiths, Richard Musgrave, Andy Paraskos, Tony Randerson, Annabel Wilkinson.

### **Also in Attendance**

County Councillors David Chance, Andrew Lee, Greg White (Executive Members).

Officers: Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director Library and Community Services, NYCC; Sarah Foley, Customer Programme Manager, NYCC; Justine Brooksbank, Assistant Chief Executive, Business Support, HR and OD, NYCC; Julie Firth, Head of Prevention, Children and Families, NYCC; Neil Irving, Assistant Director, Policy and Partnerships, NYCC; and Daniel Harry, Scrutiny Team Leader, NYCC.

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Paul Haslam, Stuart Parsons and Cliff Trotter.

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

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#### **1. Minutes**

##### **Resolved –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2017, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to note.

#### **3. Public Questions or Statements**

There were no public questions or statements.

#### **4. Chairman's Announcements**

Cllr Derek Bastiman asked committee members to observe the national minute's silence that was being held at 11.00am out of respect for the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire in London.

#### **5. Digital Self-Service - Update on Progress against the 2020 70% Target**

Considered -

Presentation by Julie Blaisdale, Director Library and Community Services and Sarah  
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Foley, Customer Programme Manager, North Yorkshire County Council, outlining progress against the 2020 70% digital self-service target.

In summary, the presentation highlighted the following key points:

- The way in which our customers access services will increasingly be online
- Appropriate support will be provided for those unable to access our digital services
- Digital self-service is designed with our customers and builds on 10 fundamental design principles
- All Council services will be reviewed as part of the move to digital self-service
- Priority projects have been identified based on volume, current customer experience and cost
- Examples of where on-line services are performing well include school admissions
- At present, over 50% of access to on-line services is by smartphone
- A new County Council website is to be launched in the week commencing 26 June 2017. The new website will make self-service easier than before
- The 'face-to-face' offer is under development
- The Parish Portal, which will enable Parish Councils to utilise more digital self-service, has gone live
- A visit had been undertaken to Leeds City Council to see what lessons could be learned.

In response to the presentation, a number of questions were asked by committee members.

Cllr Derek Bastiman acknowledged that lessons had been learned from the visit to Leeds City Council but requested that any further benchmarking be undertaken of similar areas, such as Northumberland or Cumbria.

Cllr Caroline Goodrick noted the opportunities that digital self-service presented but raised concerns about connectivity across the county and ability of some communities to access Broadband and mobile phone systems and networks.

Cllr Tony Randerson also highlighted concerns about access to internet based services in rural areas.

In response, Judy Blaisdale highlighted the work that was being done by the Council and partners to improve connectivity across the county. Also, that ICT services could be accessed through Libraries.

Cllr Bryn Giffiths queried whether the front page of the Customer Portal (as per slide 11 of the presentation) could be amended to include an identifier for County Councillors. The rationale being that County Councillors often have to act quickly to deal with long standing complaints or concerns raised by people in their area and some form of flag or identifier would help expedite this.

Cllr Margaret Atkinson asked whether there is any follow up on how many Parish Councils use the Parish Portal.

In response, Julie Blaisdale offered to come back to a future meeting of the committee with data on the usage of the Parish Portal.

#### **Resolved -**

The committee resolved to:-

- Thank Julie Blaisdale and Sarah Foley for attending
- Receive a progress report/update in the next 6 months
- Receive further benchmarking with comparable local authorities to see what

lessons can be learned from elsewhere

- That the Customer Portal be reviewed to see whether there is value in adding in some form of box or other means by which a request from a County Councillor is flagged
- An update be provided on the use of the Parish Portal by Parish Councils, with those who are not using it being identified.

## **6. Review of HR Annual Plan**

Considered -

Report of the Justine Brooksbank, Assistant Chief Executive, Business Support, HR and OD updating on the County Council's changing workforce, presenting key workforce data, detailing progress on the Workforce Plan and setting out some key priorities for the year ahead.

Justine Brooksbank gave a brief overview of the key issues in the report, identifying the social care workforce and the Apprenticeship Levy as being the two big issues for the next 12 months.

Cllr Tony Randerson highlighted three areas of concern, as follows:

- Have the reductions in workforce resulted in the loss of key, technical staff and so a need to recruit costly interims and contractors?
- What has been the impact upon staff morale of the re-organisation process that has been underway for the past 7 years?
- Has the sickness management policy led to an increase in presenteeism and people coming into work who are unfit to work and should really be sent home?

In response, Justine Brooksbank stated:

To date, a total of 80% of staff have been through an 'at risk' of redundancy process. This reflects the way in which the Council is having to adapt to the changing demands being made of it. Any restructure has happened gradually and in such a way as to enable those employees affected to be supported and to have ample opportunity to plan their future. Council staff are resilient and able to cope with change.

As the reductions in staffing have been gradual, there has not be a need to use significant numbers of interims or contractors. Some have been and will be used, where there is a strong business case, but this is not the norm and North Yorkshire County Council compares to similar authorities in its use of interims and contractors.

Staff sickness is low, particularly when compared to similar authorities. It has risen slightly over the past 12 months but this is not of immediate concern. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that only those people who are fit and able to work actually come to work.

Cllr Derek Bastiman queried whether there was an emotional and psychological impact upon staff associated with the pace of change.

Justine Brooksbank noted that there was a wide range of support for those members of staff who have been affected and that every effort was made to make organisational change as painless as possible.

Cllr Richard Musgrave asked what the workforce will look like by 2020.

Justine Brooksbank responded that it was likely that there would be less employees but that the reduction would be gradual over time. Whilst there is an overall downward trend in the number of back office staff, people are being recruited in other areas, such

as front line social work and in emerging commercial activity.

Cllrs Derek Bastiman, Bryn Griffiths and Annabel Wilkinson then raised a number of concerns about shortages in the adult social care workforce, particularly in the private care market, and the possible impact of Britain's exit from the EU.

Justine Brooksbank made the following points, in response:

- Low levels of unemployment mean that it is often difficult to recruit to social care jobs
- There is a move to target recruitment at people who are under-employed who may be able to work in the community in which they live
- To be competitive the wage levels need to be around £9 to £10 per hour.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths queried whether, given the amount of money that had been spent on redundancy, there had been a return on investment.

Justine Brooksbank stated that the pay bill had one down and that she would make the data for the past five years available to the committee.

Daniel Harry made the committee aware that the Scrutiny of Health Committee and the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee were looking into the workforce planning across the NHS and social care locally.

#### **Resolved -**

The committee resolved to:-

- Thank Justine Brooksbank for attending
- That a report be brought back to the committee in 6 months (11 December 2017) to provide an update on social care workforce planning with a comparison by district of the workforce pressures
- That the year on year comparison of the total amount spent on employee pay, covering the past 5 years and also projecting forward, is circulated to committee members as soon as possible.

## **7. Youth Justice Strategic Plan**

Considered -

The presentation of Julie Firth, Head of Prevention, Children and Families, North Yorkshire County Council, providing an overview of the work of the Youth Justice Service in North Yorkshire, specifically: resourcing; priorities; impact on offending and re-offending; and the focus on early intervention and prevention.

Julie Firth provided an outline of the key points of the current Youth Justice Strategic Plan and the factors that will influence the development of subsequent plans, as summarised below:

- Over the past 10 years, there has been a dramatic fall in the number of children and young people who are in the youth justice system
- Those children and young people who are in the system are presenting with more complex needs
- The age group that are most likely to offend are now the 10 to 14 years of age group
- There has been a national review of Youth Justice, the Charlie Taylor Report, the findings of which need consideration
- A greater focus on early intervention and prevention to reduce first time entrants
- The service performance relatively poorly on first time entrants and re-offending but relatively well on use of custody measures

- There are high levels of victim engagement and satisfaction
- There has been an increase in the targeted project work with young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

Cllr Derek Bastiman asked whether it would be possible to speak with some young people from North Yorkshire who had been sentenced to custody, to better understand their views and experiences of youth justice and what had been done to help them.

Cllr Tony Randerson noted the very large drop in the number of children and young people in the youth justice system and queried whether this reflected a genuine fall in offending or whether this was a result in changes in recording practices by the Police and how offences were being dealt with.

In response, Julie Firth stated that the decline was in part due to more effective joint working, a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention and improved practice and in part due to changes in recording and dealing with offences.

Cllr Richard Musgrave noted the relatively poor performance in some areas and queried why this was the case when North Yorkshire is one of the safest places to live in the country.

Julie Firth stated that the reoffending data that is used is derived from Police data, which is 18 months old. As such, it does not reflect the current position. To enable Youth Justice to maintain a current view of offending in the county, a cohort of 29 live cases is monitored. This has suggested that a relatively small number of offenders are responsible for a large proportion of offences.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths queried what prevention and early intervention work is being done in primary schools, as it is often apparent from an early age that some children are at risk of becoming involved in offending.

Julie Firth replied that the Tier 1 part of the youth justice service works directly with primary schools to support children at risk of becoming involved in offending.

#### **Resolved -**

The committee resolved to:-

- Thank Julie Firth for attending
- That a visit be arranged to a Young Offenders' Institute to enable Members to speak directly with young people from North Yorkshire who had been sentenced to custody, to better understand their views and experiences of youth justice and what had been done to help them.

## **8. Locality Budgets - Future Delivery**

Considered -

The report of Neil Irving, the Assistant Director, Policy and Partnerships, reviewing the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets in the second year of the pilot (financial year 2016/17).

Neil Irving introduced the report and gave an overview of the second year of the locality budgets, as summarised below:

- The second year of the locality budgets programme had gone well with positive feedback from County Councillors
- An average of 5 projects were supported by each councillor

- Only one councillor had not taken part in the scheme
- The impact is difficult to reasonably assess, due to the relatively low levels of funding involved. However, the projects that have been funded have supported the Council's strategic objectives, promoted engagement with communities, led to match funding, and supported volunteering and community action
- The on-line application process for this next round of funding will be launched in the week commencing 26 June 2017.

Committee members were supportive of the Locality Budgets scheme and thanked Cllr David Chance and Neil Irving for the work that they had done to implement and manage the scheme.

Cllr Derek Bastiman stated that the value of the scheme had been that the use of funds had not been overly restricted and there was an opportunity to use small amounts of money to support very local initiatives. He noted, however, that it would not be appropriate for the locality budgets to be used in areas where the Council already funded a services, such as highways repairs.

Cllr Tony Randerson queried why one of the County Councillors had not used any of the locality budget that had been allocated to them.

Cllr Caroline Goodrick noted that members of the community were grateful for what the locality budgets had supported in their area.

Cllr David Chance stated that all of the applications for funding through the locality budget scheme were subject to a robust system of checks and tests to ensure that they complied with the terms and conditions of the scheme.

**Resolved -**

The committee resolved to:-

- Thank Neil Irving for attending
- That an update on progress with the implementation of Locality Budgets is provided in 12 months' time.

**9. Overview and Scrutiny at North Yorkshire County Council and Committee Work Programme**

Considered -

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader, providing Members with a summary of how overview and scrutiny is undertaken at the Council, the way in which subjects for scrutiny are identified, why it is important and what role committee members have to play and providing details of some of the specific responsibilities and powers relating to this committee and also a copy of the committee work programme for review and comment.

Daniel Harry introduced the report and requested that committee members forward any items for possible inclusion on the work programme to him.

**Resolved -**

The committee resolved to:-

- Note the report.

**10. Other business which the Chairman agrees should be considered as a matter of**

**urgency because of special circumstances.**

No other business was raised.

The meeting concluded at 12:25

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