

## North Yorkshire County Council

### Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 11 December 2017 at 10.30 am.

**Present:-**

County Councillor Derek Bastiman in the Chair.

County Councillors, Margaret Atkinson, Bryn Griffiths, Cliff Lunn (substitute for Caroline Goodrick), Richard Musgrave, Andy Paraskos, Caroline Patmore (substitute for Paul Haslam), Tony Randerson, Cliff Trotter, Annabel Wilkinson and Nicola Wilson.

**Also in Attendance**

County Councillors Carl Les (Executive Members).

Officers: Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director, Library and Community Services, NYCC; Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Stronger Communities Programme, NYCC; Mike Roberts, Head of Highway Operations, Highways and Transportation, NYCC; Neil Irving, Assistant Director, Policy and Partnerships, NYCC; Louise Rideout, Senior Strategy and Performance Officer, NYCC; and Daniel Harry, Scrutiny Team Leader, NYCC.

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Val Arnold, Caroline Goodrick (substitute Cliff Lunn), Paul Haslam (substitute Caroline Patmore) and Executive Members David Chance and Greg White.

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

**26. Minutes**

**Resolved –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2017, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**27. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to note.

**28. Public Questions or Statements**

There were no public questions or statements.

**29. Library Service Reconfiguration - 6 month Post Implementation Review**

Considered -

Report and presentation of Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director, Library and Community Services and Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Stronger Communities Programme presenting the findings and initial recommendations of an early, interim, 6-month review of the North Yorkshire library service following its reconfiguration in April 2017.

Julie Blaisdale stated that 33 libraries had successfully made the transition to being community run as of 1 April 2017. This was a 6 month post implementation review and a full 12 month review would be brought to the committee in the summer of 2018. Julie Blaisdale then gave a presentation, the key points of which are summarised as below:

- A restructure of library staffing ran in parallel to the transition of the 33 libraries to being community run
- The role of the library staff changed to become one that supported and mentored volunteers, enabling them to take on responsibility for running the libraries on a day-to-day basis
- The identified budget savings (£1.4m) are on track to be achieved and there has been no significant loss of service following the transition
- There has been no central government intervention in the reconfiguration of the library service and only one library closed (Hunmanby)
- All of the libraries can access performance data so that they are able to compare and contrast how they are doing, which has helped engender a healthy competitive spirit
- Ongoing process of gaining feedback from the community libraries so that the support given by library staff and the Stronger Communities Team can be adapted and targeted
- An annual conference is held to bring together the 33 libraries and share experiences and establish peer support
- There are some issues that relate to the initial transition that are being dealt with, including volunteer training, ICT, lease agreements and property management.

Julia Blaisdale stated that way in which the libraries had been transferred from Council management to community management had gained national recognition as best practice in a recent HM Government report. Julie Blaisdale agreed to circulate a link to the report to committee members.

Cllr Richard Musgrave asked whether it would be possible to see the original business case that was made for the reconfiguration of the library service as it was difficult to understand how successful it had been without being able to make a comparison against what was originally envisaged.

Julie Blaisdale agreed to circulate a link to the report that went to the Council Executive meeting in 2015.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths queried whether we were providing support, advice and guidance to other local authorities who were considering transferring their libraries into community management. If so, then was an appropriate charge made.

In response, Julie Blaisdale said that all local authorities worked together to share good and best practice for free.

Marie-Ann Jackson outlined how the next step was to develop libraries, where there was a need and interest, into community hubs that could offer access to a broad range of services. Examples included, the development of 'touch down' office space for partners and the rental of library space to other community groups and organisations. Cllr Derek Bastiman asked what long term support was being made available to the library volunteers and whether there was a risk that people currently volunteering would lose interest once the transition had been completed or the scale of the task of running a library become clear.

Marie-Ann Jackson said that the Stronger Communities Team continue to provide support to the community libraries, support that was approximately 40% of the staff time.

Marie-Ann Jackson stated that there has been some churn in trustees and that a lot of

effort was put into the recruitment and retention of volunteers. It was recognised that there was an increasing need for volunteers to help with the delivery of services across the public sector and that the Council alone relied upon about 5,000.

Cllr Derek Bastiman queried whether the Council had a plan to recruit and retain the volunteers that it needed now and may need in the next 3 to 5 years. Also, whether such a plan also linked to the work of other public sector organisations.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths noted that there was a risk that, as the current cohort of volunteers aged, there would be increasing competition for a dwindling number of volunteers in the county.

Marie-Ann Jackson stated that work was underway at the Council to better understand the current and future use of volunteers in the county and what needed to be done to recruit and retain them.

Julie Blaisdale said that Cllr Helen Swiers was running a series of events to recognise the contribution that volunteers made.

In summing up, Cllr Derek Bastiman thanked Julie Blaisdale and Marie-Ann Jackson for attending and congratulated them on everything that they, their teams, library staff and volunteers had done to make the transition a success.

#### **Resolved -**

- a. That there is continued support from both Libraries staff and Stronger Communities to enable community libraries to be sustainable and self-sufficient in the long term
- b. That further work is done to ensure that sufficient volunteers are recruited and retained to enable community libraries to be sustainable and self-sufficient in the long term
- c. Julie Blaisdale to send the link to the HM Government Taskforce Report on library service reconfiguration best practice to the committee members
- d. Julie Blaisdale to send the link to the paper that went to Executive in 2015 outlining the Business Case for the transformation of library services provision
- e. Julie Blaisdale and Marie-Ann Jackson attend the committee meeting at 10.30am on Monday 18 June 2018 to provide an update on the first 12 months of the new service model, including work that is being done by to recruit and retain volunteers.

### **30. First 100 days of the Parish Portal**

Considered -

The report of Sarah Foley, Customer Service Central Manager/Customer Programme Manager and Mike Roberts, Head of Highway Operations, Highways and Transportation, providing an overview of the first 100 days of the Parish Portal, identifying progress made and areas for improvement.

Mike Roberts noted that Sarah Foley was unable to attend the meeting and had sent her apologies. Julie Blaisdale was present to assist.

Mike Roberts then gave an overview of the early development and implementation of the Parish Portal, as summarised below:

- There are 731 Parish Councils in North Yorkshire, of which the total number of inactive councils is unknown. Of the total, 320 Parish Councils have registered for

- an account. This is compared to a target of 355 (50%) by the end of January 2018.
- The Parish Portal enables those registered to access updates added by Highway Officers on work that has been identified and is underway
  - Work is ongoing to register more Parish Councils
  - Five Highways services can be accessed through the Parish Portal at present. The number of Council services accessed could be increased, subject to understanding what it is that the Parish Councils would find to be of most use
  - The Parish Portal has enabled significant savings to be achieved, 2,400 hours staff time per year, across Area Business Support Teams, Highway Customer Communication Officers and Highway Officers.

Mike Roberts stated that there has been positive feedback from those Parish Councils that currently use it and also that the functionality of the portal could be developed significantly.

At this point a number of committee members raised concerns that the Parish Portal enabled Parish Councils to have access to more detailed information on highways issues and how they were being responded to in the local area than County Councillors could access.

In response, Mike Roberts stated that the Parish Councils could register a County Councillor as a recipient of the data and information they receive.

Julie Blaisdale noted the concerns of the committee members and stated that the Council's Technology and Change Service are currently looking into how County Councillors could view the information that is seen by their respective Town and Parish Councils, noting that some councilors may have as many as 30 Parish Councils in their electoral division.

Julie Blaisdale asked for volunteers from the committee to work with Technology and Change on the development of this management dashboard.

In response, Cllr Andy Paraskos and Cllr Tony Randerson volunteered.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson asked that an email be sent out to all of the remaining Parish Councils to highlight the advantages of registering for the Parish Portal and some of the added functionality that has been developed since its launch.

Cllr Andy Paraskos stated that not all Parish Councils had ready access to or familiarity with ICT. As such, work may need to be done to identify which Parish Councils required additional support to get on-line and using the Parish Portal.

Cllr Caroline Patmore said that the Parish Council Clerks were key and that they needed to be provided with ICT support.

Cllr Margaret Atkinson stated that the Parish Portal had led to a significant drop in the number of complaints that she received about outstanding Highways issues.

Cllr Richard Musgrave asked whether any work was being done with the district and borough councils on a shared portal.

In response, Mike Roberts stated that the option was there to join up with a wide range of agencies and organisations but that the system tended to work best for asset-based issues, such as street lights and pot holes.

Cllr Derek Bastiman summed up and thanked Mike Roberts for attending the meeting.

**Resolved -**

- a. Sarah Foley, Mike Roberts and Julie Blaisdale to attend the committee meeting at 10.30am on Monday 18 June 2018 to provide an update on the Parish and Customer Portals, particularly take up by Parish Councils and the support given to Parish Councils in using the portals
- b. Julie Blaisdale to provide a briefing to a future 'Members Seminar' on the Parish Portals
- c. Julie Blaisdale to email committee members seeking volunteers for testing out the management dashboard that is being developed by the Council's Technology and Change service.

**31. Outcome of the Workshop (14 November 2017) on the Parish and Customer Portals**

Considered -

The update by Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director, Library and Community Services on the outcome of the workshop for committee members on 14 November 2017 on the Parish and Customer Portals.

Julie Blaisdale noted that the workshop had been attended by 5 County Councillors and that there had been a good debate about the Parish and Customer Portals and how they could be developed further.

The key issue that arose was one of County Councillors being better informed of what issues had been logged in a Parish Council area, what was being done to resolve them and whether any remained outstanding.

Cllr Derek Bastiman stated that this had been addressed as part of the discussions on the previous agenda item and asked whether committee members had anything further to add before moving onto the next item.

Cllr Tony Randerson noted his disappointment that the workshop had failed to address his original concern that there needed to be some means by which a query or request by a County Councillor could be flagged and so receive urgent attention. The reason being that when people brought an issue to a County Councillor it was often because it remained unresolved and people were disgruntled. As such, it needed immediate attention.

**Resolved -**

- a. That the update be noted.

**32. Stronger Communities Programme - Progress Report**

Considered -

The report of Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Stronger Communities, providing an update on the work of the Stronger Communities Programme.

Marie-Ann Jackson said that the role of the Stronger Communities Programme was to support communities to play a greater role in the delivery of services in North Yorkshire and achieve some key community objectives. In doing so, there were opportunities to mitigate the impact of reductions in local authority funding.

Marie-Ann Jackson gave an overview of some of the key areas of work, challenges and areas for development, as summarised below:

- The focus in the first three years has been upon the four priority service areas of community libraries; children, young people and families (school readiness); sustainable community transport; and services for older people and adults with additional support needs (loneliness and social inclusion).
- In the first two years of operation the Programme invested £1.9m on more than 250 community projects across 80 communities
- The 2016 LGA Peer Review stated that more could be done to empower communities. This prompted a review of the Stronger Communities Programme and a move away from grants giving to a new model of delivery and the 'Inspire, Achieve, Innovate' investment plan
- There are four strategic projects that are being undertaken in 2017: North Yorkshire Connect; Physical Activity Services for Older People; Go Local; and an Approved Provider List
- The role of County Councillors as community champions was increasingly important
- Future work is likely to focus on prevention and also recruitment, retention and training of volunteers.

Marie-Ann Jackson said that a five year independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the Stronger Communities Programme and its new investment approach will be commissioned in 2018.

Cllr Derek Bastiman asked how the right balance was achieved between what the community identified as an area of need and what the Council wanted to achieve or do with that community.

In response, Marie-Ann Jackson said that there was a balance to be struck and often some negotiation was needed. It was often the case, however, that there was a coincidence of needs.

Cllr Derek Bastiman highlighted the need to be assured, before agreeing any grant funding, that an agency, organisation or community group was resilient and sustainable in the long term.

Marie-Ann Jackson stated that every effort was made to check that organisations were sustainable and had clear, long term investment and finance plans in place.

Cllr Derek Bastiman thanked Marie-Ann for attending the committee meeting and asked that she come to a future meeting to provide an update on how the recruitment and retention on volunteers is supported.

**Resolved -**

- a. To support the work of the Stronger Communities Team
- b. Marie-Ann Jackson to attend the committee Mid Cycle Briefing on 23 April 2018 to provide an update on how the Council is working to recruit and retain volunteers in the county.

**33. Refresh of the County Council Plan 2017/21**

Considered -

The report of Neil Irving, Assistant Director, Policy and Partnerships and Louise Rideout, Senior Strategy and Performance Officer, updating on the Ambitions and High Level Outcomes being considered as part of the refresh of the 2017-2021 Council Plan.

Neil Irving confirmed that this is a refresh of the existing County Council Plan and that

the intention is to take it to Executive on 30 January 2018 and then to Council on 21 February 2018. As such, this is an opportunity for the committee to comment upon the Ambitions and High Level Outcomes.

Neil Irving gave an overview of the plan and the planning process and made the following key points:

- An earlier version of the County Council Plan had previously been reviewed by at the committee Mid Cycle Briefing on 30 October 2017
- All of the actions that support the Ambitions and High Level Outcomes have been signed off by senior officers
- The aim is to test out the general direction of the Plan, the tone and emphasis
- The Ambitions link back to key Council and partnership strategies and policies
- A final draft will be circulated to members for comment over the Christmas period.

A number of committee member queried the ranking of the High Level Outcomes. In response, Neil Irving said that they were not in priority order but had been numbered for the purpose of referencing.

In response, Cllr Derek Bastiman stated that it would be helpful to have the High Level Outcomes ranked in order of priority or importance. If that was to be done, then the following changes could be made:

- In the 'Every Child' ambition, place 'A healthy start to life with safe and healthy lifestyles' to the top of the list
- In the Every Adult' ambition, place 'Vulnerable people are safe....' To the top of the list.

There was general agreement amongst committee members that this was the preferred prioritisation.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths said that there was no longer a requirement to have a Community Plan and that the current plan was due to expire. He asked whether there would be a new version that would run alongside the County Council Plan.

Neil Irving replied that much of what had previously been in the Community Plan had now been included in the County Council Plan and had been articulated in a more meaningful way. As such, there seemed little value in having a separate Community Plan.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths expressed his concerns that there was a risk that the issues that had been identified as important in the Community Plan could be lost. Cllr Bryn Griffiths said that he would reflect upon this and get back to Neil Irving, if he remained concerned.

**Resolved -**

- a. To re-consider the numbering of the High Level Outcomes, reflecting the priorities agreed by the committee
- b. Neil Irving to attend the committee meeting on 3 December 2018 to update on progress with the implementation of the County Council Plan.

**34. Committee Member visit to Wetherby YOI on 31 October 2017**

Considered -

The report of Daniel Harry, Scrutiny Team Leader, updating on the outcome of the visit that County Councillors Bastiman and Randerson undertook to HMI YOI Wetherby on

31 October 2017, as part of the ongoing interest of the Committee in understanding what can be done to reduce reoffending rates amongst young offenders in the county.

Daniel Harry said that the visit had been arranged to better understand from a young person's perspective, what worked in terms of reducing offending and re-offending. This followed on from discussions about youth justice services at the committee meeting on 19 June 2017 where it was found that North Yorkshire had higher rates of re-offending by young people than other similar areas.

Daniel Harry explained that the visit had been arranged with the Governor of HM YOI Wetherby and that he and Councillors had been accompanied by Lisa Atkinson of the NYCC Youth Justice Service and escorted around the site by Lex Gray, Resettlement Officer at HM YOI Wetherby.

Daniel Harry said that they had spoken with one young person from North Yorkshire who was in custody, as part of the escorted visit.

Cllr Derek Bastiman said that the visit had been extremely helpful in understanding the realities of imprisonment. A great deal of positive work was being done with young people in custody at HM YOI Wetherby to help them rehabilitate. This included, access to 30 hours of education and training a week, mental health services, physical health services and drug and alcohol misuse services. There was also a very successful Army Cadets programme that helped some start a career in the military after release from custody.

Cllr Derek Bastiman said that there were significant resource pressures at HM YOI Wetherby which meant that some of the educational and rehabilitation programmes were disrupted when prison staff were called away to manage an incident.

Cllr Tony Randerson said that the cells were what you would find in an adult prison. Even though those people in custody were young people, in many respects they were treated like adults. Cllr Tony Randerson also noted that there were sometimes violent assaults in the prison and that most of the young people in custody had been sentenced to longer periods of imprisonment, ranging from 9 months to indeterminate sentences.

Cllr Derek Bastiman stated that many of the education and rehabilitation programmes could only be accessed by young people who were serving longer sentences and that there needed to remain a strong focus upon equipping these young people with skills and a trade that would enable them to earn a living upon release.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson said that there were community projects for young people who had offended that helped them build up work experience and skills. This included restaurants that employed former offenders.

Cllr Cliff Trotter noted that in the past it had been possible to setup football matches with HM YOI Wetherby and other local prisons. This had been a useful element of rehabilitation.

Cllr Nicola Wilson said that more could be done around day release and enabling people to get used to work and established prior to being released from prison.

Cllr Richard Musgrave queried how much it cost to keep a young person in prison and whether that money could be better spent in the community.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths suggested that it may be helpful for committee members to visit an adult prison to better understand what work was done with them there to reduce the likelihood of reoffending upon release.

Daniel Harry suggested that a visit to a C-Category prison may be helpful, as the adults there will have been in the prison system for some time, engaging in rehabilitation and



preparing for release.

Cllr Derek Bastiman agreed and asked Daniel Harry contact a local Category C adult prison that had prisoners from North Yorkshire and setup a visit for committee members.

In summing up, Cllr Derek Bastiman expressed his thanks to the prison Governor and staff who had made the visit possible. Also, to the young person who had given his time to speak with the Councillors and share some of his experiences.

**Resolved -**

- a. That a letter of thanks be sent to the Governor of HM YOI Wetherby for allowing the visit to take place and to note the time and effort put in by Lex Gray and the prison officers to make the visit successful.
- b. That a letter of thanks be sent to the young person who was interviewed.
- c. That Julie Firth attend the meeting of the Committee on 12 March 2018 to provide an update on the 'Youth Justice Strategic Plan', the implementation of the new model of practice and the impact this has had upon reoffending rates.
- d. That Daniel Harry setup a visit for committee members to a Category C adult prison, likely to take place in spring 2018.

**35. Work Programme**

The report of Daniel Harry, Scrutiny Team Leader, NYCC, providing Members with a copy of the committee work programme for review and comment.

Daniel Harry introduced the report and members suggested a number of areas for inclusion as agreed below.

**Resolved -**

- a. An item for scrutiny of branch bank closures in the county and access to face to face banking and ATMs, particularly in rural areas, be included on the agenda for the committee meeting on 12 March 2018.
- b. An item for scrutiny of Post Office closures in the county and access to face to face banking and ATMs, particularly in rural areas, be included on the agenda for the committee meeting on 12 March 2018.
- c. An item for scrutiny of the governance of the Council's traded services be included in the committee work programme.

**36. 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 12.10.

DH