

North Yorkshire County Council

Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 4 March 2019 at 10.30 am.

Present:-

County Councillor in the Chair – Derek Bastiman

County Councillors Val Arnold, Bryn Griffiths, Mike Jordan, Cliff Trotter, Tony Randerson, Annabel Wilkinson, Angus Thompson and Stuart Parsons.

Also in Attendance

Executive Members: County Councillor David Chance

North Yorkshire County Council Officers: Keeley Metcalfe, Senior HR Advisor; Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Stronger Communities; Martin Weblin, Community Rehabilitation Company; and Melanie Carr, Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer.

Apologies for Absence

Received from: County Councillor Margaret Atkinson, Richard Musgrave, Caroline Goodrick and Andy Paraskos

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

77. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2018, 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.

79. Public Questions or Statements

There were no public questions or statements.

80. Chairman's Announcements - Any correspondence, communication or other business brought forward by the direction of the Chairman of the Committee

There were no announcements.

81. Corporate Volunteering Project Update

Considered –

Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Stronger Communities provided an introduction to the Corporate Volunteering project and Keeley Metcalfe, NYCC Senior HR Advisor provided an outline of the progress made to date.

Officers detailed the need for a consistent approach across all North Yorkshire County Council services where volunteers were active, to ensure those volunteers felt valued. It was confirmed that the Volunteer Sub-Group met every 6-8 weeks to discuss challenges and priorities, and that the draft Volunteer Strategy presented at the meeting focused on ensuring an approach that was fair and equitable for all, and would make clear NYCC's commitment to volunteers.

It was noted that the Strategy contained a set of Volunteer Strategy Standards that were designed to aid in the assessment and management of volunteers. Members were also pleased to note the planned work to develop a marketing strategy that would promote volunteering in an engaging and positive manner, improve marketing for future volunteers.

Members discussed the importance of volunteer recognition and the payment of volunteer expenses. County Councillor Stuart Parsons suggested that firstly, understanding the cost implications of introducing expenses for all, was important. Marie-Ann Jackson confirmed that it would include looking at the cost implications for those who need to travel as part of their volunteering role, but also the impact and social value of the work of volunteers

County Councillor Paul Haslam queried best practice, and it was confirmed that national best practice was being considered.

Members discussed work experience opportunities for volunteers, and its role as an indicator for employers. They recognised the importance of utilising volunteers' skills and having questioned the most appropriate way of doing so, suggested the introduction of a skills register. They also highlighted the need for effective training for those NYCC staff who were managing volunteers. Finally, whilst they acknowledged that a majority of volunteers were middle aged and older, they were pleased to note the growing number of younger people who were volunteering.

Executive Member County Councillor David Chance confirmed his support for the work to date, and reiterated that it was not just about recruitment and retention but also about what was fair and equitable.

Resolved -

- i) That Officers be thanked for their update
- ii) That a future update in six months be added to the Committee's work programme.

82. Reducing Adult Reoffending Update

Considered -

Martin Weblin of the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) provided an outline of the history of CRC and gave a presentation on:

- CRC's work within prisons and its integrated through the gate approach (ITTG)
- Day of release

Item 1

- Support in the Community by CRC and its partners
- The management of risk

In regard to ITTG, Members noted the approach had been relaunched across all prisons in England, leading to improvements in communication, the delivery of case management with outreach to communities, interventions across the gate and the co-commissioning of services.

Martin Weblin outlined the three service levels - primary services, primary services with specialist interventions, and specialist interventions with HITT Team (working with prisoners in prison and in the community for the first five weeks).

It was confirmed that prisoners due for release who were assessed as vulnerable and/or likely to re-offend were prioritised. The assessment included consideration of employment, finances, accommodation and education – without those, ex-offenders were at higher risk of re-offending. Following assessment an agreement plan was put in place for each prisoner. Those given the highest level of support were collected from prison on the day of release, and taken to all of their first appointments e.g. benefits, drugs agency and housing etc.

County Councillor Tony Randerson questioned whether the services offered were compulsory and it was confirmed that dependent on the individual circumstance, they may be expected to adhere to their plan as a condition of their licence.

Members were pleased to note that the new approach had led to greater assessment in prison, and the introduction of over 100 new staff.

In regards to drug use, Martin Weblin confirmed that many prisoners needed to be stabilised before being moved into education / training. In some instances where a prisoner was in danger of overdosing on release, appropriate medication was introduced into their system, in order to stabilise their usage before release.

County Councillor Stuart Parsons expressed disappointment that prisoners with longer sentences had better access to education and training, and that those services were the first to suffer when there was an issue in prison. It was also noted that if training opportunities for ex-offenders from North Yorkshire were to be tied to the training opportunities offered in prisons, the focus would have to be on the training offered in prisons such as Hull and Armley as that was where the majority of prisoners from North Yorkshire served their sentence.

Members agreed it would be much better if a prisoner was able to start a benefits claim whilst still in prison so that their access to financial support could commence from day one of their release.

Members were pleased to note the work of the community network helping put ex-offenders in touch with their families, offering peer mentoring etc for at least a year following release from prison. Specific support was also given to those at risk of dropping out of services e.g. rough sleepers etc.

In regards to the management of risk, it was confirmed that CRC were responsible for those where there was a low to medium level of risk of re-offending, and the National Probation Service were responsible where there was a high risk. Priority was given where there was risk of harm to others. An integrated offender management approach and working closely with the Police were key.

In regard to the work of the National Probation Service, Members were disappointed that Louise Johnson had been unable to attend the meeting and agreed to defer her presentation until a later meeting.

Resolved -

That:

- i) Martin Weblin of the CRC be thanked for his presentation
- ii) The National Probation Service Update be deferred to the next Committee meeting

83. Draft Work Programme 2019/20

Considered -

The report of Melanie Carr, Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer, providing Members with a copy of the Committee's draft Work Programme for the coming municipal year.

Members agreed the draft work programme for the coming municipal year subject to the addition of:

- i. The deferred update from the National Probation Service and the Committee next formal meeting in June 2019.
- ii. A volunteering update at the formal meeting in September 2019.

76. Other business which the Chairman agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances

There was no other business.

The meeting concluded at 12:10 pm.

MLC