

North Yorkshire County Council

13th November 2013

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman's Statement

My Chairman's statement for this full council includes details of the Committee meeting on the 1st November 2013. The meeting focussed on looking at the County Council's workforce of the future, the development of the Council Plan and an update on the library strategy and actions following the peer review, as well as a regular report from the Executive Member County Councillor Carl Les.

1. Executive Member's Progress Report

County Councillor Carl Les updated the Committee on; Superfast North Yorkshire.[SFNY] and that an advisory board of members is being set up; a Members Workforce Development group is being set up and the NYCC website has been refreshed and designed to be more inter-active.

Cllr Les went on to outline the items in the Executive forward plan:
County Council 13/11/13 – annual review of contract procedure rules;
Members questioned the contract procedures around the Ringways contract.
County Council 19/02/14 – Council Plan – shorter, thinner, still fit for purpose?
Executive 29/10/13 – possible expansion of SFNY
Executive 29/10/13 – pooling of business rates
Executive 03/12/13 – One Council progress report

Finally he highlighted two future areas to be considered; the savings programme for the County Council for the future and the Police & Crime Commissioner's approach to the commissioning of services.

2. Workforce for the future

Members were updated on the County Council's changing workforce, and considered key workforce data as well as the information available to managers to help them better manage their team.

We were advised that the workforce in both schools and the County Council continues to reduce;

Schools: was 14,822 in 09/10 and now 14,125 (end Q2)

Council only: was 10,027 in 09/10 and now 8,580 (end Q2)

Headcount total: was 24822 in 09/10 and now 22,705 (end Q2)

Despite staff reductions recruitment continues particularly for frontline posts. It was encouraging to see that sickness absence remains relatively low.

The use of innovative 'e tools' to help managers was demonstrated. 'Insight' pulls live data from HR and Payroll Resourcelink system so managers have up to date information available providing them with an overview of their team.

3. Council Plan

The Council Plan is a key component of the Council's policy framework, setting out the Council's objectives and how resources are to be used to deliver those objectives. Ensuring the Council Plan is developed in a timely and robust manner is essential in order to drive forward the business of the Council and improve performance, including the Council's contribution to the delivery of the North Yorkshire Community Plan.

Members felt the Council Plan would provide a more readable and usable document if it was produced as a short, high level document which clarifies the vision and values of the Council's longer term strategic direction.

The Committee accepts that due to reducing funding, the role the Council plays in the delivery of services will have to change. The Plan therefore needs to describe an approach which focusses more on leadership, enabling and commissioning. This will include ensuring that the key issues for people and places in North Yorkshire are identified and understood, and that there are strategies, developed with communities and partners, in place to tackle these. It will also mean supporting individuals, families and communities to do the best for themselves, including providing self-service facilities and ready access to relevant information and signposting.

4 Library update

Members were reminded that prior to October 2011, North Yorkshire Council Council's Library Service directly managed the delivery of 43 "static" libraries and a fleet of 11 mobiles. As part of the Council's £90m budget reduction, the Service was required to make £1.7m of savings over three years from April 2011 to March 2014, which equated to approximately 28% of its budget. Originally, this figure was over £2m; but as a result of public response over the three-month consultation period eliciting over 6,000 written submissions £350k was reinstated into the budget.

Although the consultation changed the original proposals which were to reduce the number of fully council funded libraries to a core number of 18, the level of savings required still necessitated major changes to the number and role of frontline staff, as well as back office.

North Yorkshire County Council now directly manages 32 libraries and one "supermobile" serving remote communities and, of these nine libraries have either maintained or extended their opening hours through volunteer involvement.

In addition, nine libraries are managed and delivered on a day to day basis by volunteers / community groups in partnership with the County Council and with direct input and support from the professional libraries team. A further 20 outlets / book collections are also provided in communities through village halls and centres. Members were pleased to see that the service continues to provide a wide range of opportunities for apprentices and volunteers, including the work of the home library service.

Members thanked Julie Blaisdale for the work of the service and supported the key themes for the future direction of the service:

- A Community Space for community involvement and participation
- A major contributor to the Health and Wellbeing of individuals and communities

- Supporting people into work and building employability skills through providing opportunities for apprentices and volunteers
- Being the conduit for people to access the digital age by supporting communities and individuals to fully realise their potential via access to the opportunities provided on-line
- Delivering frontline customer service and information
- Access to books promoting reading as an essential life skill impacting on learning, employment and prosperity; the likelihood of offending and re-offending; community participation; physical and mental well-being.

5 Work programme

The Committee agreed to look at the County Council's communications solutions for the future focusing in particular on video conferencing. The membership of the Task Group was agreed as; County Councillors Tim Swales, Val Arnold and Andrew Lee.

County Councillor Tim Swales

Chairman Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee
County Hall
Northallerton
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