

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

11 November 2015

SCRUTINY BOARD

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

Scrutiny Board was represented at Executive (Performance Monitoring) on the morning of 18 August 2015. We contributed to the review of performance on Winter Maintenance, Highway Maintenance and Waste Management.

At our formal meeting that afternoon we supported the approach of the Scrutiny of Health Committee and the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (TEEO SC) holding a joint meeting in January 2016 for their work on Fracking. There is a good deal of overlap between the environmental and public health aspects of Fracking so the committees will be seeking to take evidence from a very similar range of organisations. Holding a joint meeting is a pragmatic approach. We agreed that the objective of the meeting will be to inform publication of the emerging Joint Minerals and Waste Plan with regards to Fracking. The committees will not be getting involved in individual planning applications.

In connection with the committees' work on Fracking we also received a briefing on the rules on "Predetermination" as set out in the Localism Act 2011. Under the Act it is proper for Members to play an active part in local discussion and that they should not be liable to legal challenge as a result of taking part in a debate about an issue. The important consideration is that no matter what has been said previously; at a planning committee meeting every Councillor who will take part in a decision must approach their decision making with an open-mind in that they must have regard to all material considerations and be prepared to change their views if persuaded that they should.

We considered Public Health England's Health Profiles for North Yorkshire. The overall message for North Yorkshire was very good. A real concern, however, was the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads – we are amongst the lowest performing 25% of local authority areas. The TEEO SC receives an annual report on road casualty statistics and work to improve safety, including the work of the 95 Alive York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership.

The Annual Survey of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government 2014/15 highlighted the importance of ensuring the scrutiny is adding value. Work programmes which are relevant and seek to improve outcomes are essential.

County Councillor Elizabeth Casling
Chairman: Scrutiny Board

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