

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13 November 2019

CORPORATE & PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Since my last statement to Council, the Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee has held one formal meeting in September 2019.

The Committee received a bi-annual update on the Corporate Volunteering project and agreed that adoption of the strategy was a milestone for the Authority, as it introduced a number of welcomed improvements e.g. a clearer procedure for claiming expenses; the adoption of an ID badge scheme - not only practical from a security point of view, but also symbolic as the branding emphasises the esteem with which the Authority views the volunteer contribution; and also the opportunity for volunteers to maintain and retain a record of their involvement with services which amounts to a form of Curriculum Vitae - especially valuable for younger volunteers in terms of their future career options.

In addition, the Committee considered a progress update on the County Council's equality work which included progress on achieving the equality objectives agreed for the period 2016-2020. The Committee were pleased to note the progress made in embedding the use of Equality Impact Assessments through the introduction of a clearer work-flow process, and endorsed the primary role of the Scrutiny Committees in terms of ensuring and maintaining the Authority has a record to be proud of in respect of equality and diversity. The Committee agreed the improvements would support the Authority in terms of recruitment and retention, attracting a more diverse workforce, and would enable the Authority to be a forward-thinking employer and service provider.

The Committee received a presentation on the implementation of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan which outlined structural changes in the Youth Justice Services and practice changes, the principle benefit of which was making space and time for staff to do more work with children, young people, their families and carers. They were pleased to note the feedback from parents and carers which suggested they felt more positively supported by their Youth Justice Service Worker, and asked that information on the scheme be made more widely available to councillors in order that they can promote its benefits.

An annual update on the work of the Brierley Group left some Councillors unconvinced that the year was as good as reported quoting examples from the corporate / commercial world, and argued that without strong leadership and governance the recorded £1.6m profit could potentially change to a loss making position – especially bearing in mind the spread of services the Brierley Group was responsible for, and the variable financial position of those component companies. The Committee therefore sought reassurance that there is sufficient challenge and scrutiny not just written into the arrangements but evidenced by practice, and questioned what role the Committee could play in that. The Committee is to receive a future report to explore those issues.

Finally, the Committee considered information on Brierley Homes in response to a Notice of Motion from Full Council in July 2019. The Committee considered the proposal made by County Councillor Geoff Webber and noted that housing is both a priority at both national and local level, and a key driver for other strategic ambitions such as growth, education,

health and for stronger communities. Members acknowledged the laudable intentions underpinning the motion but expressed concern at the likely effect of adopting the motion on the business operation of Brierley Homes and the Brierley Group. They noted the intention for any profit generated to be initially reinvested into the business to allow it to grow, and any future dividend distributions to be used to subsidise Council business thereby partially offsetting the need to reduce frontline services.

With this in mind they concluded not to support the motion. The formal response from the Committee is shown elsewhere on this agenda.

Cllr Derek Bastiman
Chairman - Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee
23 October 2019