

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 November 2020

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF SCRUTINY BOARD

Members will be aware that Scrutiny Board brings together the Chairs of the five thematic overview and scrutiny committees at the Council and the Older Peoples' and Young People's Champions. It provides an opportunity for a whole council view of scrutiny activity, which avoids gaps and overlaps and helps establish a lead committee for areas of joint interest. It also provides a forum in which the key performance issues for the Council can be reviewed and items for further scrutiny identified.

The meetings of the Council's five thematic overview and scrutiny committees were postponed at the start of the national lockdown on 23 March 2020. Over the period April to August, all of the committees kept actively engaged in their agendas with regular email updates, briefings and general information. All of the overview and scrutiny committees are now back up and running as live broadcast meetings.

There have been two meetings of Scrutiny Board since my last statement to Council.

The first was on 24 July 2020. At that Skype meeting, the Council's Q4 2019/20 and Quarter 1 2020/21 performance and finance management report was scrutinised, ahead of the members of the Board attending the Executive on 28 July 2020. Some of the issues raised at the Executive meeting by members of the Scrutiny Board are highlighted below:

- The resilience of the Council's IT infrastructure and how it coped with the massive increase in remote working during the lockdown? It was noted that there was a peak figure of 3,700 people logging in remotely to the Council's network on one day
- The long term impact of the pandemic on public transport, in particular bus services, and whether concerns about transmission of the virus will see a shift towards private transport
- The lessons learnt from the covid-19 related deaths in residential and care homes
- The response to increasing safeguarding concerns during the lockdown
- The role of Public Health in the delivery of the winter 'flu vaccination programme and its planned expansion by central government
- The long term plan for the Community Support Organisations and the level of financial support given to community and voluntary sector organisations at a time when many of the revenue streams that they normally depend upon had dried up
- The support that had been put in place for schools and SEND children in anticipation of them re-opening in September.

The second meeting was held by Microsoft Teams on 28 October 2020. The membership of this meeting was expanded to include the Vice Chairs of the five thematic overview and scrutiny committees and also any County Councillor who wished to observe the discussions. The reason for this was that the Board was asked to review the proposed unitary submission, ahead of the meeting of the Executive on 3 November 2020. Whilst this was not formal scrutiny, as the meetings of Scrutiny Board are held in private and the papers are not published, it provided an opportunity for members to comment from the perspective of their committee work.

The notes of the discussions were collated and will be shared with the Executive at their meeting on 3 November 2020 so that they can be taken into account as part of their

considerations as to whether to approve the submission of a unitary proposal for North Yorkshire to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Members of Scrutiny Board are next due meet on 4 December 2020. At that meeting, the Executive Q2 Performance and Finance Management Report will be scrutinised. Also, further scrutiny work on the response to the pandemic and lessons learned will be mapped out.

Members will be aware that scrutiny was created to act as a check and balance on the executive and is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DEREK BASTIMAN
Chairman of Scrutiny Board
30 October 2020