

# North Yorkshire Council

## Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Monday, 9 June 2025 commencing at 10.30 am.

Councillor Andrew Williams in the Chair. plus Councillors Bryn Griffiths, Chris Aldred, Karl Arthur, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, Tim Grogan, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Subash Sharma, Malcolm Taylor and Phil Trumper.

In attendance: Councillors Carl Les.

Officers present: Melanie Carr, Gary Fielding, Trudy Forster, Brigette Giles, Marie-Ann Jackson, Kerry Metcalfe, Karen Iveson and Jonathan Spencer.

Other Attendees: .

Apologies: Nick Brown and Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff. .

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### Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

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#### 44 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff and Councillor Nick Brown. Councillor Nick Brown was substituted by Councillor Derek Bastiman.

#### 45 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 March 2025

**Resolved** – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2025 be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### 46 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

#### 47 Public Participation

No public questions or statements were received.

#### 48 Transformation Update

**Considered** – A report of the Corporate Director for Resources providing a progress update on transformation activity within the council, with a particular focus on the Corporate Property Strategy.

Members noted the four strategic aims, the 2035 ambition for each and their planned deliverables by 2030 within the draft Corporate Property strategy, and attention was drawn to the key progress to date detailed in the report. It was confirmed that going forward, a number of associated key performance indicators would assist in tracking progress, and

that these would be regularly monitored and reported on to a number of audiences.

Members queried a number of sites within their individual divisions that they believed were either surplus to requirements or ripe for re-development. There was a particular focus on the three units adjacent to Harrogate Royal Baths, and Gary Fielding, Corporate Director for Resources confirmed that whilst they had stood empty for a period of time (in part due to COVID), two of the three were now occupied. He agreed to provide data on the lost revenue for those units outside of the meeting.

The Chair drew attention to paragraph 5.14 – the 2035 ambition for Aim C - Sustainability and Carbon Reduction. He sought assurance that the cost of achieving the ambition would be properly monitored to ensure the Council received value for money from its carbon reduction work.

It was confirmed the Strategy would have an associated action plan detailing the objectives, steps planned and timeline for delivery which could be used to monitor progress. Members agreed they would like to consider the draft Customer Strategy prior to its approval and therefore agreed to also add this to their work programme for their next formal meeting on 29 September 2025.

Members agreed they would like to consider the full draft Corporate Property Strategy prior to its approval and agreed to add it to their work programme for their next formal meeting in September 2025.

The number of double devolutions deals completed since LGR was raised and it was confirmed that some were currently being progressed. Members recognised that this required a period of negotiation and that each case was unique and often complex due to the parties involved. Carl Les, Leader of the Council confirmed he was confident and satisfied with the progress made to date.

Members also noted the adoption of a 4-day working week for waste operatives and reference was also made to the ongoing work to draft a Customer Strategy.

The Chair acknowledged that the work to date was well ahead of where was forecast for this stage, and it was

**Resolved** – That:

- i. The solid and good performance be noted.
- ii. The draft Corporate Property Strategy and draft Customer Strategy be added to the committee's work programme for the next meeting on 29 September 2025.

## **49 Corporate Services Performance Update**

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) providing a summary of performance data related to corporate matters, that formed part of the recent quarterly performance report to the Executive.

Will Boardman, Head of Strategy & Performance introduced the report which highlighted that members of the Scrutiny Board had sought no responses from the Executive Members on corporate matters at the last Performance Monitoring meeting of the Executive, held in May 2025.

In regard to the KPIs and associated narrative detailed in appendix A, Members suggested:

- A lessons learnt report on the impact of the adverse weather conditions would be helpful.
- Changes to bin collections should be posted on social media in order to reach as many people as possible.

In regard to council tax collections, it was confirmed that the council was a high performer and that it would continue to pursue the outstanding 2.5%. Members suggested that the inclusion of some benchmarking data in future quarterly performance reports would be helpful, and officers agreed to take this forward.

Members also noted the changing behaviour of customers in regard to using the council's website i.e. the increased use of the chatbot facility online, the rise of Artificial intelligence, and the increase in the use of the website 24/7.

Resolved – That the performance updated be noted.

## **50 Workforce Annual Update**

Considered – An annual workforce update report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support & HR).

Trudy Forster introduced the report which included workforce data for the new Council. Noting that most of the restructures had now been completed, the Chair queried whether they had affected performance, and it was confirmed that it was intended to carry out a series of post-implementation reviews to ensure the restructures were delivering the required results. The Chair requested that an update on this be added to the Committee's work programme for in six months' time.

Members were pleased to note the drop in temporary contracts and went on to discuss 'working from home' arrangements. It was confirmed that individual team agreements were in place to ensure appropriate home working arrangements were in place to optimise the delivery of services.

Members recognised that the office buildings available could not house all office based staff if a decision were taken to withdraw home working as a option. They also acknowledged that working from home was seen as a benefit to staff and potential new staff, and that if removed could adversely affect retention and recruitment. Members were keen to ensure that staff working hours were not increasing extensively as a result of home working and it was confirmed that this was being monitored.

In order to understand how the council's core workforce were working, Members requested an analysis of working from home arrangements for their December 2025 meeting.

Finally, Members noted:

- The rise in sickness absence for stress/Depression/Anxiety - it was confirmed that the figures for the Council were within the norm and similar to others nationally.
- The difficulties in contacting someone within the planning team – Members suggested that at the very least, there should be someone from each team in the officer every day.
- The number of women at manager level and in Management Board, noting that turnover at Management Board level was minimal.
- The recent positive improvement in filling historically hard to fill posts – Members commended the actions taken to achieve it.

Members thanked officers for the detailed annual update and it was

**Resolved** – That:

- The update be noted;
- An analysis of the council's home working arrangements and an update on the post implementation review of restructures, be provided for the December 2025 meeting;
- A further holistic update be provided in 12 months' time.

## **51 Annual Review of Councillor Locality Budgets 2024-25**

Members received a report reviewing the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets in the financial year 2024/25.

Marie-Ann Jackson Head of Localities introduced the report, and Members noted the breakdown of the organisations and types of projects/activities that had been supported throughout the year.

Overall, Members were pleased to note the overall spend of the locality budget monies and gave special thanks to Louise Marwood the administrator who had recently moved on, having successfully administered the scheme for a number of years. It was noted that the extension of the scheme from January 2025 to March 2025 had most likely enabled the majority of members to fully spend their budget.

### **Resolved –**

That the report on the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets during the 2024/25 financial year be noted.

## **52 Localities Programme Funding**

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement providing an overview of the Localities Service expenditure and how the range of programmes delivered by the Localities Service are funded.

Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Localities introduced the report which summarised the overall service expenditure and income across all three Service areas i.e. Communities, Parish Liaison and Local Devolution, and Migrant Programmes.

Members noted the income sources for each, and the profile of the spend.

**Resolved –** That the report be noted.

## **53 North Yorkshire Refugee Resettlement Annual Update**

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement, providing an update on refugee resettlement in North Yorkshire relating to the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Jonathan Spencer - Senior Resettlement Officer, presented the report confirming it had been a busy year as reflected by the report.

Members noted the resettlement figures detailed in the report and in response to a number of queries, the following was confirmed:

- The provision of extra lessons for children was patchy across the county. Some areas

had homework clubs. Schools offered additional 1:2:1 support where need was identified. Additional support for the 14-16 cohort was proving the most difficult.

- The MOD worked closely with the Council to deliver Operation Nazareth. The revamped properties delivered through that Operation, which are now no longer being used by Afghan families are now going to benefit military families.

Overall Members were please to note the progress of the refugee resettlement programme in North Yorkshire throughout 2024-25 and thanked the officer for his contribution to its delivery since it started in August 2021.

**Resolved** – That:

- The report be noted
- A further update be provided in 12 months' time

#### **54 Notice of Motion on the Provision of a Disposable Assets Register**

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Democratic Services) presenting information in response to a Motion at Full Council in February 2025 proposed by Councillor Kevin Foster stating that the council should provide a comprehensive register of its disposable assets worth £100K or more by 30 June 2025.

Councillor Kevin Foster introduced his Notice of Motion confirming his concern that the Council did not have such a register already in place and his view that it should not be difficult to produce.

Members confirmed they agreed in principle but recognised the enormous amount of officer time it would require in order to produce the register. They also recognised it could be subjective as to what would be defined as a disposable asset and how an asset's value might be assessed.

Members went on to discuss a number of assets potentially appropriate for disposal and it was agreed that Members were the most knowledgeable about their individual divisions and therefore best placed to identify local assets that might be suitable for disposal.

Having reflected on Members views, Councillor Kevin Foster confirmed that in the first instance, he would like to take the suggestion of member involvement in identifying assets for disposal to his Area Committee for discussion. He also confirmed his intention to withdraw his Notice of Motion.

**Resolved** – That the Notice of Motion be noted

#### **55 Work Programme 2025-26**

***The report of the Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer inviting Members to consider the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of 2020 taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the county.***

**Resolved** – That the work programme be updated to reflect the additional items identified throughout the meeting, as follows:

- For the meeting on 29 September 2025:
  - Draft Corporate Property Strategy

- Draft Customer Strategy
- For the meeting on 15 December 2025:
  - ***Update on Home Working Arrangements***
  - Post-implementation Review of Restructures

**56 Date of Next Meeting - 16 June 2025 - Attendance of Deputy Mayor for York & North Yorkshire**

The meeting concluded at 11.58 am.