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North Yorkshire County Council

Executive

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Tuesday, 22nd February, 2022 commencing at 11.00 am.

County Councillor Carl Les in the Chair. plus County Councillors Gareth Dadd, Derek Bastiman, David Chance, Michael Harrison, Andrew Lee, Don Mackenzie, Patrick Mulligan, Janet Sanderson and Greg White.

In attendance: County Councillors Stanley Lumley, John Ennis, Janet Jefferson, Karin Sedgwick, Annabel Wilkinson, Paul Haslam and Caroline Dickinson and Paul Haslam.

Officers present: Gary Fielding, Barry Khan, Stuart Carlton, Richard Webb, Melanie Carr, Patrick Duffy and Tony Law.

Apologies: Richard Flinton.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

709 Introductions

Members of the Executive and Corporate Management Team introduced themselves, followed by other Councillors present at the meeting.

710 Declarations of Interest

In regard to Agenda item 4, County Councillor Michael Harrison declared two disclosable interests, as an employee of one of the organisations listed in Treasury Management Appendix B, and with close family members employed at the Council. He confirmed he had two separate dispensations from the Standards Committee enabling him to remain in the meeting and vote on Agenda item 4.

711 Public Questions and Statements

There were no public questions or statements.

712 Q3 Performance Monitoring and Budget Report

Considered –

A joint report of the Chief Executive and Corporate Director - Strategic Resources, bringing together key aspects of the County Council's performance on a quarterly basis.

County Councillor Carl Les introduced the Quarter 3 performance monitoring and budget report, confirming the in-depth focus for the performance section of the report as being Best start to life, an area that continued to have a significant number of challenges in the delivery of education and children's social care during the pandemic.

County Councillor David Chance presented the Executive performance report summary, confirming the performance report provided strong evidence of the Council's strong

performance and leadership despite COVID-19, and continued progress in delivering its wide-range of ambitions.

He went on to provide a brief summary of the strengths and challenges in performance across those ambitions and the priorities set out in the Council Plan which included:

- The awarding of 32 grants totalling £26K to 30 community groups;
- The household support fund continued to make best use of the £3.5m allocated by the DWP;
- Key areas of support to households in need of assistance included direct awards of £275K in shopping vouchers, an increase food supply via the Food bank winter support fund, and an energy top up voucher scheme;
- The delivery of free public wi-fi in five towns across North Yorkshire, with a further four towns set to receive it in early 2022;
- Further reductions in the County Council's carbon footprint, through carbon abatement programmes across the Council's property portfolio;
- A reduction in the amount of waste and an increase in recycling, resulting in an ongoing reduction in landfill;
- Local Government Reorganisation continued to build impetus, with the development of detailed plans;
- Adult Social Care assessment activity continued to be a significant pressure point, driven largely by the national pathway arrangements for hospital discharges;
- Ongoing challenges across the care provider market, with a worrying trend of providers handing back care packages;
- An 8% increase in the cost of residential home care compared to same period last year;
- A rise in sickness absence across all services with the main cause being COVID – a range of mitigations had been put in place;

County Councillor Carl Les acknowledged the strong performance the County Council continued to deliver, and specifically in regard to the ambition of 'Leading for North Yorkshire', County Councillor Don Mackenzie welcomed the update on the delivery of Broadband and free public wi-fi with 18 town centres now being targeted, with a further three to be added.

County Councillor Janet Sanderson introduced the in-depth focus of the performance report on 'Every child & young person has the best possible start in life'. She confirmed it was an uncertain picture going forward due to the pandemic recovery and national funding. She drew particular attention to:

- A reduced number of contacts at the front door translating to an increase in referrals;
- An increase in demand for statutory child protection, with more families moving into crisis;
- A dip in the number of up to date health checks for children in care, but an increase in the number of dental appointments;
- A challenging demand for specialist provision, with CRC's who had normally provided families with overnight respite care having to be adapted to provide support for young people with highly complex needs;
- An increase in the number of children with EHCPs and an increase in the demand for assessment due to difficulties with employing educational psychologists – attention was drawn to the mitigation measures now in place detailed on page 23 of the report;
- An increase in the number of children and families presenting with mental health problems – work with CCGs was ongoing to identify and meet capacity;
- An increase in wellbeing issues for Looked after Children
- The positive findings from the Ofsted inspection in summer 2021, which reaffirmed the quality of practice demonstrated across the service;

County Councillor Janet Sanderson also thanked CYPS officers for their hard work,

throughout the recent exceptionally challenging times.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan highlighted the active steps been taken by the school improvement team to address the decline in the proportion of schools that had been judged good or outstanding.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd queried what was being done to identify those children with short-term mental health issues as a result of their changing environment and in response, Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director for Children Services acknowledged the increased stress and strain on families and children due to the impact of the challenging times, which was evidenced by some sustained demand at the front door and for specialist services.

In response to a number of queries from County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson, Stuart Carlton acknowledged the resulting impact of the pandemic on the delivery of services and provided an overview of the work ongoing to monitor and address the capacity issues. In terms of schools, he confirmed the introduction of earlier pathways and whole school training. He also noted the types of mental health support being provided in schools, the demand and supply issues around social workers, and the ongoing concerns about Children's Respite Centres and the increase in the associated costs.

County Councillor Janet Jefferson drew attention to the work of the Children & Young People's Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 2021-22 and the support given by officers and the Executive to that work. She also expressed concern about the backlog in Ofsted inspections, the increase in elective home education and the increase in first time entrants to the Youth Justice System.

In response, Stuart Carlton confirmed:

- The new system in place for EHE was having a positive effect on the number of families choosing not to transfer to EHE;
- His concern about the current EHE legislation which prevented him from having a right to see an child in EHE or to assess the quality of education being provided in a home setting;
- The ongoing monitoring and assessment of the Youth Justice Service by the Youth Justice Board;

County Councillor Gareth Dadd drew attention to the increased cost of SEND/Children's Services which had been a factor in the recent Council decision to increase Council Tax.

County Councillor Greg White expressed concern about insufficient SEND provision for pupils with higher levels of need and in response, it was confirmed that there were small things that could be done by a local school to keep a child with complex needs in that setting in their local community. It was also noted that the higher needs block had been significantly challenged for some years, which had resulted in a number of difficult decisions, taken to address the related overspend.

Stuart Carlton provided an overview of the investments made in recent years to address the need for SEND provision but acknowledged the need for more capital investment. He also outlined possible opportunities for future SEND capital funding and the ongoing lobbying of Government to achieve an equitable share of that funding.

Members went on to consider the remaining sections of the performance report. Specifically in regard to 'Growth', County Councillor Derek Bastiman highlighted the ongoing work with the LEP on the zero carbon economy and the carbon abatement programme, and the reduction in waste.

In regard to 'Healthy and Independent Living', County Councillor Michael Harrison

highlighted the ongoing pressures on Adult Social Care, in particular the number of unsourced packages of care. He also drew attention to the ongoing 'Make Care Matter' recruitment campaign, and the easing of Covid restrictions and what that means for the Care Sector.

In response to Scrutiny Board members queries, it was confirmed that:

- Negotiations were ongoing with the NHS about the future arrangements for the hospital discharge pathways;
- There was a massive backlog of people wanting elective NHS treatment requiring hospital capacity
- More people were now coming forward with a hidden need, and living well referrals were now back up to pre-pandemic levels;
- Reablement staff would naturally return to that service as the market recovered and more resources became available to provide planned care;
- The temporary pause of respite services and short term care was being monitored weekly;

Finally, County Councillor Caroline Dickinson commended officers for changing their ways of working and for their hard work throughout the pandemic.

Revenue Budget, Treasury Management & Capital Plan

County Councillor Gareth Dadd introduced each section of the report. In regard to Revenue, he confirmed:

- The underspend had increased to about £7.7m, which was less than 2% of the planned spend;
- HAS had received lots of one off funding through the year which had given it a sustainable budget this year;
- Children's Services overspend had reduced by about £1m since the last quarter;
- The possibility of further spending required in BES in response to the effects of winter, which could eliminate the current underspend;

County Councillor Don Mackenzie welcomed the underspend on street lights and traffic lights, and the increased income from the permit scheme.

County Councillor Carl Les referred Members to the recommendations in the report, and having considered the report and the information provided at the meeting, members of the Executive agreed to note:

- a) The latest position for the County Council's 2021/22 Revenue Budget, as summarised in **paragraph 2.1.2**.
- b) The position on the GWB (**paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.3**)
- c) The position on the 'Strategic Capacity – Unallocated' reserve (**paragraphs 2.4.4 to 2.4.7**)
- d) The position on the County Council's Treasury Management activities during the third quarter of 2021/22
- e) The updated Q3 2022/23 Capital Plan

Executive Members also agreed to recommend to the Chief Executive Officer that using his emergency delegated powers he refer the Q3 report to the Audit Committee for their consideration as part of the overall monitoring arrangements for Treasury Management.

713 Harrogate Grove Road and Woodfield Community Primary Schools

Considered:

A report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service presenting the outcome of the public consultation carried out by North Yorkshire County Council on the proposals to amalgamate Grove Road and Woodfield Community Primary Schools in Harrogate from 1 September 2022, and seeking authorisation to publish the statutory proposals, and to schedule taking a final decision on the proposals on 19 April 2022.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan introduced the report and provided an overview of the background to the proposed amalgamation of Grove Road and Woodfield Community Primary Schools in Harrogate as detailed in the report. He also provided an overview of the consultation process undertaken on the proposal to achieve the amalgamation through the technical closure of Woodfield Community Primary School as a separate entity from 31 August 2022, and the enlargement of Grove Road Community Primary School by expansion onto the Woodfield site from 1 September 2022.

County Councillor Paul Haslam as a local Councillor and governor of Woodfield Community Primary School read out a statement he had submitted prior to the meeting in which he expressed his support for the proposed amalgamation.

Executive Members noted the report and all voted in favour of the recommendations, and it was

Resolved – That it be recommended to the Chief Executive Officer that using his emergency delegated powers he approve:

- i. The publication of the statutory proposals and a statutory notice on 3 March 2022 proposing to amalgamate Grove Road and Woodfield Community Primary Schools, through the technical closure of Woodfield Community Primary School as a separate entity from 31 August 2022, and the enlargement of premises and expansion onto the Woodfield site of Grove Road Community Primary School from 1 September 2022.
- ii. The scheduling of a final decision on the proposals for the Executive on 19 April 2022.

714 Forward Plan

Considered –

The Forward Plan for the period 14 February 2022 to 28 February 2023 was presented.

Resolved - That the Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.23 pm.

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Woodfield School / Grove Road amalgamation notes to the Executive.22/02/2022

I speak to you as one of two councillors for Bilton and Nidd Gorge which includes Woodfield School. It should be noted that I am also a school governor – the governing body supports this amalgamation.

This is written in support of the proposed amalgamation.

We know that the provision of (excellent) Education is the proven cornerstone of moving areas out of poverty and improving the life chances of the children and residents. Woodfield is the most deprived ward in Harrogate and one of the most deprived places in NY.

We must keep a school in this area.

I became involved with Woodfield School in 2018 following it having some challenging moments in the leadership of the School that led to a significant loss of pupils. It's important to note that the School's problems started several years before, culminating in things going seriously wrong in early 2018.

Today the school has outstanding leadership, sadly it is temporary and therefore considered a serious weakness in the eyes of ofsted, the teaching is of the highest quality and a brand new curriculum is now in place (a lack of which contributed to the school going into special measures). I am a lay person but believe the school would pass an ofsted inspection if it were subjected to one now.

I have consistently championed and supported the School at every opportunity, at county council level, at ministerial level and with the Regional Schools Commissioner. We have had and continue to have great support (far too many people to mention) including one term where the acting Head Teacher was the assistant Head at Grove Road at that time.

The children attending are safe, happy and learning.

However, events have conspired over the last few years that school has never had a window where it could confidently recruit and consequently has continued to lose pupils. Pupil numbers are in the 50s now compared to 154 in 2018. Although I am confident of the schools performance, I think it is a tall order for the school to acquire a net 25 pupils a year for the next 5 years in order for its financing to get on to a better footing.

My vision for a school in woodfield

"...serves the community by becoming a thriving, vibrant, safe school where the wellbeing of the pupils is at the centre of everything we do. We provide an ambitious and quality curriculum in a learning environment that gives the children the best possible start in life and equips them for life in modern Britain

The school provides pupils with opportunities to learn outside of the classroom, such as educational visits. These visits are linked closely to enhance learning and the curriculum. Subsidies will be sourced, where necessary, to ensure they are open to all. The School's mantra of INSPIRING: LEARNING: TOGETHER guiding everything we do.

But a School needs to do more; to be central to the wellbeing of the community

“That the school becomes a central hub and support for the community by providing preschool nursery facilities; and before and after school activities, in particular breakfast - a best possible start to the day. And enabling the residents of Woodfield to work knowing their children are safe and gainfully occupied.

The facilities of the campus; the school, the library and the green fields provide a healthy environment for learning and play.

It will have an entrance on the greenway allowing pupils to safely access the school by bike or on foot and open the school up to the residents of Claro road.

Outside the school we will have a 20mph speed limit, crossing and zigzags, again reinforcing our safety approach.”

However, vision is not enough. The school has major financial problems and the governors have been seeking solutions to this. Schools are funded based on the number of pupils on roll and since the loss of half its pupils the income has not been sufficient. This has made the school an unattractive option for Academisation.

Woodfield school must evolve according to its circumstances. The school has two options: amalgamation with Grove Road; or carry on as is knowing that it must recruit a minimum of 30 pupils a year – which is not being achieved at the moment and, sadly, there is no reason to believe this will happen despite the fact that the school serves (has a catchment of) 357 pupils excluding the Claro road area.

So how does the amalgamation impact on my vision? Well, I believe it enhances it. More pupils (350) will benefit from the fabulous indoor and outdoor facilities, and better air quality. All pupils will have access to an excellent education. The combined School will also be able to provide before and after school facilities. There may be some short term logistical challenges but I believe that this will be great for pupils, great for parents, great for the area.

I will continue to support Woodfield School as a councillor and governor in whatever guise it exists.