

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Monday, 7th March 2022 commencing at 10.30 am.

Present: County Councillor Andy Paraskos in the Chair. Plus County Councillors Val Arnold, Margaret Atkinson, Mike Jordan, Yvonne Peacock, Matt Scott, Cliff Trotter and Annabel Wilkinson.

In attendance: County Councillor David Chance.

Officers present: Justine Brooksbank, Keeley Metcalfe, Adele Wilson Hope, Alaina Kitching, Simon Moss and Melanie Carr.

Apologies: County Councillors Bryn Griffiths, Caroline Goodrick, Richard Musgrave and Tony Randerson

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Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

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### **178 Public Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021**

Resolved –

That the public Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read, and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **179 Apologies & Declaration of Interest**

There were declarations of interest to note.

### **180 Public Questions & Statements**

There were no public questions or statements received.

### **181 Workforce Update**

Justine Brooksbank, Assistant Chief Executive for Business Support, provided an overview of the detailed report presented, and highlighted the following:

- A year dominated by Covid - bereavement, long Covid, impact of mental health, pressures of HAS etc;
- Not much change in key workforce data, just a slight reduction in staff numbers;
- An under reporting of ethnicity;
- An increase in staff sickness absence from 6.5 days last year to 8 days this year, which was still low in comparison to other Local Authorities and employers;
- The health and wellbeing support given to employees as detailed in paragraph 4.5 of the report;
- An increase in staff turnover (historically around 11% but currently around 16%) – the authority was struggling with retention and recruitment, with some pressure in technical

- roles and a doubling of the spend on agency staff;
- The range of communications channels in use for providing support and information to staff;
- Change in Government guidance regarding self-isolation and public sector guidance for employees was expected to change at the end of March 2022;
- The 4<sup>th</sup> year of the Apprenticeship levy scheme as detailed in paragraphs 5.16 – 5.20 of the report;
- The high retention levels from graduates, and the additional graduates recruited to support the ongoing work on the Local Government Review;
- Good progress was being made regard to improving diversity, equality and inclusion, with expanding employee networks becoming more vocal;
- The staff survey had highlighted a number of key points with a good response rate and an increase in the level of staff satisfaction. There had also been lessons learnt from the online engagement process, and work was ongoing to address the recorded lack of confidence in going back to working in the office, which had been attributed to concerns around Covid;
- A new corporate framework approach had been agreed regarding new hybrid ways of working and when face to face was required;

County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson suggested the more open conversations being had around mental health and wellbeing was likely to be a factor in the increased recording of long-term absences attributed to that reason.

County Councillor Yvonne Peacock queried whether there were problems with teacher training and it was confirmed there was a reducing school workforce as a result of increased academisation.

Justine Brooksbank drew Members' attention to section 5 of the report on recruitment and the in particular the Authority's involvement in the Government's Kickstart Scheme. She confirmed that unemployment for young people in North Yorkshire was at 4% whereas nationally it was 6%, and highlighted the Authority's role, acting as a broker for employers across the County and confirmed that more employer participation was needed. It was noted that traineeships had been less successful as a result of not having the right type of roles available.

Members acknowledged the massive recruitment challenge nationally in the care market and noted that the HUB supported the wider care sector not just the Authority. They were disappointed to note that whilst the recruitment campaign undertaken by the Authority had been successful, it had only resulted in the recruitment of 200 care staff.

Finally, Justine Brooksbank provided an overview of the ongoing work being undertaken as part of the LGR HR Workstream. She highlighted the new combined team in place with District and Borough Council colleagues and the shared website for vacancies. She also noted the face to face sessions that would take place from June 2022 with all district and borough council staff regarding TUPE. The intention of those sessions being to reassure staff and ensure retention.

Members thanked Justine Brooksbank for her detailed report and requested that she pass on the Committee's thanks to all staff.

**Resolved – That:**

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

## 182 Corporate Volunteering Project Update

Adele Wilson-Hope introduced the report and provided an overview of the progress with the Volunteer Programme project, which had been significantly impacted by Covid.

Attention was drawn to the table at paragraph 3.2 of the report which provided details on volunteering levels

Members noted both the recently undertaken volunteers' survey and the positive feedback received, and the introduction of an online application form. They also acknowledged that a key part of being a volunteer was receiving recognition for their efforts.

County Councillor Yvonne Peacock noted the closures of some local libraries, and it as confirmed that NYCC Libraries were about to commence a volunteer recruitment drive.

Members noted the key focus for the Corporate Volunteering Project over the next 12-18 months would be Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Keeley Metcalfe, NYCC's Talent Acquisition Manager, confirmed that Scarborough Borough Council and one of the District Councils already had a structured volunteer programme, whilst others took a more ad-hoc approach. It was also noted that volunteer services currently engaged by one of the Districts, Borough and County Council would be brought into a consistent Volunteer approach in the new North Yorkshire Council. Officers confirmed the next update would provide a more overview of the ongoing work to unify that approach.

Members thanks officers for their update and it was

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

## 183 Council Plan Update

Simon Moss, NYCC's Strategy and Performance Team Leader provided a verbal update on the ongoing work to refresh the Council Plan, as a follow up to the written report provided at the last meeting of the Committee.

Alaina Kitching, Strategy & Performance Officer provided an overview of the main changes i.e. the addition of a Local Government Review ambition with associated priorities, the new additional outcome for the 'Leading for North Yorkshire' ambition and the new priorities for the 'Every adult has a longer, healthier and independent life' ambition.

County Councillor Yvonne Peacock was pleased to note the introduction of a Rural Taskforce which would be leading on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Rural Commission findings

County Councillor Andy Paraskos raised the issue of improving east to west connectivity and suggested that other options aside from the M62 needed consideration. In response officers confirmed that large funding schemes would be required for the delivery of other options and that the Authority worked hard to ensure access to additional funding as and when it became available.

Members thanks officers for their verbal update, and it was

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

**184 Draft Work Programme 2022/23**

Members considered the Committee's draft Work Programme for the coming municipal year 2022-23 as presented in the report of the Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer.

Taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the county, Members

**Resolved** – That the draft work programme for 2022-23 be noted.

**185 Private Minute of the meeting held on 6 December 2021**

**Resolved** –

That the private Minute of the meeting held on 6 December 2021 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The meeting concluded at 12.01 pm.