

North Yorkshire County Council

Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Tuesday, 5th March, 2024 commencing at 10.30 am.

Councillor Andrew Williams in the Chair. plus Councillors Karl Arthur, Nick Brown, Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, Bryn Griffiths, Tim Grogan, Subash Sharma, Malcolm Taylor, Phil Trumper and substitutes: Councillors Eric Broadbent, George Jabbour, Andrew Murday and Heather Phillips.

In attendance: Executive Member for Finance & Resources - Councillor Gareth Dadd.

Other Attendees: PFCC Zoë Metcalfe and Chair of the Community Safety Partnership - Assistant Chief Constable Catherine Clarke.

Officers present: Melanie Carr, Gary Fielding, Will Boardman and Odette Robson.

Apologies: Councillors Chris Aldred, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Mike Schofield and Steve Shaw-Wright.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

67 Apologies for Absence & Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Ireton, Robert Heseltine, Mike Schofield, Steve Shaw-Wright and Chris Aldred

68 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 December 2023

Resolved:

That the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023 and the revised draft Minutes from the meeting held on 11 September 2023, be approved and signed as a correct record.

69 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

70 Public Participation

There were no public participants registered to speak at the meeting

71 Attendance of North Yorkshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

Zoe Metcalfe – North Yorkshire Police Fire & Crime Commissioner attended the meeting to provide an overview of the progress and improvements against the inspection reports produced by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

It was noted the PFCC was required to seek the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer's perspective on HMICFRS reports and to publish a response. It was also noted those HMICFRS inspection reports were just one part of the information about the efficiency and effectiveness of North Yorkshire Police (NYP) and North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service (NYFRS) used by the PFCC to hold both Chief Officers to account.

The PFCC confirmed she had acknowledged the progress made whilst being robust in her challenge to both Chief officers where necessary. In particular, she had:

- Immediately convened and live-streamed Public Accountability Meetings where she scrutinised both Chief Officers on their progress against their HMICFRS improvement plans.
- Received monthly progress reports from both chief officers on their HMI improvement action plans at meetings of the Joint Executive Board (the most senior joint strategic decision making and scrutiny body in the corporate governance framework).
- Restructured the Office of the PFCC to bring greater focus to delivery & assurance. The Office had also adopted its first-ever Delivery Plan describing how the team had delivered and assured the Police & Crime Plan, and Fire and Rescue Plan.
- Introduced a new Assurance Framework within the PFCC office, to continually monitor and assess delivery of outcomes against priorities in both plans and cross-referenced those to HMI assessment frameworks.
- Amplified the complaints function into a full Customer Service Team to independently manage complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction (and compliments) about NYP and NYFRS, ensuring an impartial and fair review of matters raised.

In regard to NYP, the PFCC confirmed she had not been satisfied with their performance in those areas of enduring concern identified and had continued to robustly scrutinise and drive assurance on behalf of the public. This included overseeing the following operational and corporate improvements:

- Investment in the Force Control Room, in respect of 101 and 999 but also in respect of child and adult safeguarding, resulting in significantly improved response times.
- Improving safeguarding structures and processes, with an additional 49 officers and additional funding leading to an increase in police officers in frontline roles, specifically on response policing (total 1,663 FTE of which 1400 were operational staff).
- Step changes in the reduction of backlogs within the crime recording and occurrence management unit and addressing the backlog in digital forensics.
- Delivery of Leadership Programmes to almost 300 supervisory personnel, and the introduction of Diversity, Equality and Inclusivity modular development and training programmes.
- A revised and refreshed overarching vision and 'plan on a page' focusing NYP staff and officers on the Force Values of Impartiality, Integrity and Respect – and the approaches of Being Victim Focused, Working in Partnership, Targeting Offenders, Intervening Early, Problem Solving, and Being Inclusive.
- A NYP Staff Survey (completion rate 61.8%), and a public trust and confidence survey to gauge trust and confidence in the policing response across York and North Yorkshire.
- A refresh of NYP's Workforce Plan and adoption of a revised system of governance to drive, challenge and assure progress in areas of concern.
- The introduction of Tactical Risk and Assurance Meetings to ensure attention to improvement plan delivery with escalation where necessary.

- Investment in 60+ new police vehicles; reintroduction of the rank of Chief Superintendent; an increase in the number of detectives and in the size of the safeguarding team.
- The renegotiation of the strategic intent between NYP and NYFRS to enable improved collaboration.

Members were pleased to note the improvements made and the PFCC confirmed that publication of the outcome report from the latest PEEL inspection carried out by the HMICFRS at the end of 2023 was expected in a week. She also confirmed the new chief constable would be in place as from 1 April 2024, and that he had already started recruitment for a new Deputy.

In regard to HMFERS, the PFCC confirmed that following an inspection in spring 2022:

- A new Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer had been appointed, who in turn had built a new Strategic Leadership Team to lead the Service into a strong, professional, and sustainable future.
- A rigorous ongoing programme of improvement had been implemented and the Chief Fire Officer had put in place immediate plans to address the 2 causes of concern raised. Those had been reviewed by HMICFRS at the end of January 024 and the huge strides forward had been recognised, resulting in both causes of concern being lifted by HMICFRS. Their next full inspection is due at the end of 2024.
- A Community Risk Profile had been created, to include stakeholder's social, economic and demographic information enabling the Service to understand the risk across York and North Yorkshire. The information had been fed into the new Risk & Resource model which the public were consulted on in summer 2023, and its implementation had increased prevention and protection work across communities; provided permanent investment into prevention and protection teams; improved the availability of on-call fire engines in rural areas; and estate improvements such as £1.1m at Ripon Fire Station.

In response to Members questions, the PFCC confirmed:

- The Fire Service's financial planning was sound with a balanced budget - she acknowledged it had been underfunded for a generation which had led her to negotiate successfully with central government for precept flexibility in 23/24 bringing in additional funding of £800k that year.
- Neighbourhood Policing Teams had been restructured and there was sufficient funding available to enable the Service to achieve an outstanding rating. She also acknowledged that the continuity of officers in a patch helped improve relations with residents and communities.
- A bid for funding from central Government had been made to help address ASB hotspots – Councillor Williams was pleased to note there was evidence that low level issues were been identified and addressed in Ripon, and Councillor George Jabbour confirmed the increased visibility of NYP in the Ryedale area.
- The use of technology in support of policing was currently underused but would play an integral part going forward.

Having noted the progress made, the Chair thanked the PFCC for attending and it was:

Resolved – That the verbal update provided by the PFCC be noted.

72 Bi-annual Update on Community Safety Plan Delivery & Partnership Working

Odette Robson, Head of Safer Communities and Catherine Clarke, Chair of the Community Safety Partnership attended the meeting to present a bi-annual update on partnership working around the priority areas agreed by North Yorkshire Community Safety Partnership. The report provided an improved focus on performance with performance data/statistics presented in Appendix A and referenced was made to some additional information circulated by Odette Robson prior to the meeting which addressed two issues raised by the committee in September 2023 when they received the last update i.e.:

i. What was driving sexual orientation related hate crimes and the steps being taken to address it, as part of their next update?

The update confirmed there was no obvious pattern/trend to the increase looking at the data over that quarter (62 reports compared to 43 previous year same quarter). It was spread across periods of time across the year.

It also confirmed North Yorkshire Police and partners were taking steps to address sexual orientation hate crime, with more awareness raising taking place and encouragement of reporting. For example:

- North Yorkshire Police undertook a survey at the Pride event in York in June 2023 to help establish what the barriers were to reporting and to support the building of trust and relationships.
- York LBGT Forum delivered a session during Hate Crime Awareness Week to partners across North Yorkshire and York. Within North Yorkshire Police Hate Crime
- A dedicated PCSO was in place to lead on engagement with communities and seldom heard voices.

Councillor Andrew Williams queried what was being done in those areas where groups such as PRIDE were not in place, and it was confirmed that liaison officers were involved in a range of other forums including schools.

ii. What actions are being taken to address the significantly higher levels of female reporting of domestic abuse (DA) and the spike in male domestic abuse victims in Quarter 2?

The update confirmed the DA Tactical Group met fortnightly to review trends in reported incidents and crimes and to direct activity at an operational level where appropriate, The small increase in crimes in Q2 which sat across the geography and not at one single locality was believed to have been as a result of a reporting delay at year end within NYP.

Odette Robson confirmed there had been an increase in Domestic Abuse reporting during the COVID period, but an increase in reporting did not necessarily equate to an increase in incidents and improved reporting was a good thing. She also confirmed the Vulnerability Board continued to monitor domestic abuse and IDAS had just been recommissioned.

The update also confirmed that IDAS, through commissioned services to support all victims of domestic abuse, had undertaken a significant amount of awareness raising within communities and with professionals. For example, rural and community engagement events with Health Professionals including GP's, college students, and worked with churches, community centres and libraries etc. This included working with marginalised women's groups and older people.

IDAS had also:

- Employed a specialised domestic abuse advocate for older victims.

- Undertaken a significant amount of awareness raising with male victims – see a dedicated webpage for male victims [Male victims of domestic abuse - IDAS](#) .
- Sent newsletters to 12,000 subscribers highlighting men as victims of domestic abuse a few times a year. [Supporting male victims. Don't miss. \(mailchi.mp\)](#)
- Collated blogs from male survivors. [Tony's story - IDAS](#)
- Delivered a multi-agency training package for professionals across North Yorkshire and York covering 10 different modules aimed at raising awareness of signs and indicators of domestic abuse, working with LGTBTQ & Male victims/Children/Older People/Mental health and DA /Trauma etc - more than 2000 individuals from 75 different agencies had received the training.

In regard to the ongoing 'PREVENT' work aimed at stopping people from being drawn into terrorism, Odette Robson confirmed regular radicalisation referrals were still being received and the Channel Panel was meeting regularly looking across the County. Members requested that the next bi-annual update include some more in depth information on the multi-agency Prevent Partnership Board and the local arrangements in place.

In response to Members questions Catherine Clarke confirmed:

- NYP's Licensing Department took an active and positive approach, looking at hotspots and crime data and using local knowledge to assess licensing applications and reviews.
- The Community Safety Hubs were going through a restructure but would remain based within the previous district council boundary areas. The expectation was that in 12-18months they would be brought more in line with the restructured service.
- The provision of public space CCTV would not be affected by the restructure.
- Operation Medusa was ongoing in the Selby area to address county lines issues.
- NYP officers had body cameras on when deployed, and technology was a key element in modern policing for frontline officers and firearms officers.
- Low level community tension was monitored to maintain community cohesion as it often related to deeper issues – refugees and other vulnerable residents were sometimes targeted by individuals trying to disrupt a community.
- The wider partnership perspective was crucial in sharing intelligence, and there had been a number of joint training opportunities in recent months
- There had been no identifiable spike in hate crimes as a result of the war in Gaza, and no increase that could be linked specifically to elections.

Members thanked the officer for the more detailed performance data and asked that in future less acronyms be used. They also requested that future updates continue to provide such data together with an overview of any specific work underway to address performance issues

Resolved – That:

- i. The report be noted;
- ii. The next bi-annual update include some more in depth information on the multi-agency Prevent Partnership Board and the local arrangements in place.

73 Equalities & Diversity Update

Will Boardman, Head of Policy & Performance presented a progress update on the Council's equality objectives for 2021-2025. The report covered Equality, Diversity Improvement work and actions undertaken between April 2023 (quarters one and two) and

January (quarter three) 2024. It also provided evidence of how the council's Public Sector Equality Duty 2023-2024 Annual Review of Progress was being met.

In regard to international recruitment, he confirmed the ambition was to have sufficient people self-declaring their disability on a census form.

Overall members were pleased to note the report but raised concern that equality issues that were previously more easily identifiable at a local district level may now be harder to recognise now that those areas formed only a small part of the whole North Yorkshire Council area, and agreed it was important not to lose sight of them.

They also queried whether the data in paragraphs 7.2 & 7.3 relating to Elective Home Education applied to students in academies. In response, Will Boardman agreed to provide confirmation after the meeting.

Resolved – That the update be noted

74 Property Services - Update on Property Rationalisation

Councillor Gareth Dadd, Executive Member for Finance & Resources attended the meeting to introduce the update on property rationalisation. He confirmed the expected early quick wins had not been as quick as expected but the lack of early pace had now been resolved.

Gary Fielding, Corporate Director for Resources apologised for the previous substandard report, in part due to the lack of senior officers in post within the property team, which was still struggling to get to capacity. He went on to provide a presentation that included an overview of:

- The principles behind the agreed approach to rationalise / optimise offices and the Council's commitment to a distributed model of operation;
- The quick wins which included the relinquishing of leasehold properties (Jesmond House & Civic Centre in Harrogate; Richmondshire House / Mercury House in Richmond, and North Yorkshire House and Town Hall in Scarborough) the mothballing of Stonecross and Malton House, and associated revenue and Co2 savings and capital receipts;
- The planned review of NYC Depots to identify efficiencies, deliver cost savings and future proof them.

Gary Fielding confirmed the work would involve carrying out site feasibility studies to identify their suitability of either housing, regeneration, sale, carbon offset etc. Business cases would need to be developed, and the projects would need to be structured to manage any associated risks. Appropriate engagement / consultation would also be required with staff and residents.

He noted the buildings were there to house people and things to deliver Council services, and as yet the Council did not have full clarity on all of its restructures (expected to be completed by end of summer 2024). In addition the Council's longer term position in regard to hybrid working had yet to be agreed and a decision on where Councillor would hold meetings and the senior Management team would be based was also yet to be made. He suggested there may also be opportunities to exploit with partners.

He noted the quick wins were now on track with potential revenue savings identified of between £225K - £490K (subject to the successful sublet of some properties), and the next steps were to develop options to vacate, Customer Hubs in Northallerton and Malton and new ways of working.

He also drew attention to the ongoing Member Working Group tasked with considering any identified obstacles and ways to optimise progression.

Members recognised the issue of rationalisation was service dependent and therefore closely tied to the ongoing restructure of Council Services following LGR. They therefore agreed there was a balance to be reached between taking a cautious approach until the impact on services was known and progressing the work as timely as possible.

They went on to agree the necessity of having customer access points in all areas, which could include mobile offices in some areas if appropriate. They also acknowledged the potential knock on effect that closing council buildings could have on footfall on local highstreets and on local businesses.

They also questioned the likelihood of there being parcels of land owned by the Council but not known about and Gary Fielding confirmed the information held on buildings and land (both ex-NYCC and ex-District) was imperfect i.e. the content of the existing asset registers was not great, and the finer details needed improving.

Councillor Gareth Dadd confirmed the focus was on stretch savings - the original business case included savings on buildings of £1.9m but he suggested there were bigger savings to be made on spending with partners, procurement and staffing.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member and officer for their attendance at the meeting, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The update on rationalisation be noted;
- ii. Future regular updates on rationalisation be added to the Committee's work programme;

75 Draft Work Programme 2024/25

The report of the Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer inviting Members to consider the Committee's draft work programme for the coming municipal year.

Gary Fielding - Director of Resources, highlighted that the 2024-25 municipal year would bring forward a number of key pieces of work on the development of a series of new corporate strategies relating to workforce, transformation and customer services, which the Committee may like to participate in at a strategic level.

There would also be other key pieces of work relating to ways of working, (including the development of hybrid working), HR policies and technology.

Members also noted their previous decision to received regulate updates on property rationalisation.

Members agreed all of these would be a more appropriate use of their time rather than some of the regular overview reports currently on the work programme, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The work programme be updated to include the items suggested by the Director of Resources;
- ii. The timing of each item to be agreed by the Chair following consultation by the Scrutiny Officer with the Director of Resources;

76 Date of Next Formal Meeting - 10 June 2024

The meeting concluded at 1.18 pm.