

North Yorkshire Council

Transition (LGR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 11th March, 2024 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Malcolm Taylor in the Chair plus Councillors Liz Colling (substitute), Caroline Dickinson, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, Bryn Griffiths, George Jabbour, Tom Jones (substitute), Andrew Lee, John Mann, Clive Pearson and John Ritchie.

Officers present: Rachel Antonelli (Y&NYCA), Barry Khan, Robert Ling, Callum McKeon, Gary Pearson, Paul Thompson and Will Baines

Apologies: Councillors Philip Broadbank, Nick Brown, Heather Moorhouse, Bob Packham and Stuart Parsons.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nick Brown (substitute Councillor Tom Jones), Philip Broadbank, Heather Moorhouse, Bob Packham (substitute Councillor Liz Colling) and Stuart Parsons.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 December 2023

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interests

Councillor Kevin Foster declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Mayoral Combined Authority Governance).

4 Public Participation

No public questions or statements were received.

5 Verbal progress update from Robert Ling, Director of Transformation

Robert Ling, Director of Transformation, attended to update the committee:

- That the key focus in the short to medium term is to deliver fundamental change for the new authority despite the scarce financial resources available. Services have been going line by line through budgets.
- The service convergence process is well underway, with work going on across many areas to develop coherent teams as well as new policies that are clear and

consistent.

- To ensure the performance data and information we gather as a council is robust to enable us to make real time, evidence based decisions, and to help inform our future approach to customers and the single front door.
- For example, recent work to bring seven planning portals into one has led to challenges around the front end of the website.
- A new transformation policy is in development, to create the right culture for stronger teams and to set the future direction to run through all of the organisation. Robert admitted there are currently “misaligned gears” in this regard, but the new policy will cover how to address this.
- Every senior manager is involved in shaping the new organisation, with a range of masterclasses planned to set out the way we will work as a council moving forwards.
- Adopting a continuous improvement approach will be key to developing long lasting and fundamental service transformation.
- Linking up service areas as part of wraparound groups, for example with Housing staff working alongside Adult Social Care and Health teams, is already showing signs of the benefits to residents through better joint working.

Questions from committee members included:

- The need to communicate effectively with staff, for example through use of the Yammer site.
- Ways of developing the right culture as part of the new authority.
- An indication of timescales for the next steps of the future transformation process.
- The role of elected members in bringing the transformation agenda together.
- The proposals for a one stop shop for councillors to receive support in carrying out their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Resolved –

That the update be noted.

6 Combined Authority Governance

Considered – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Democratic Services) and the Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer, York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority to update on the progress of creating a Mayoral Combined Authority and governance issues.

Some of the key points highlighted in the covering report are as summarised below:

- The preparation of the constitution has been done in two stages. The first was to get to a ‘safe and legal’ position to navigate the initial first few months of the new Combined Authority. It is proposed that a working group of the Audit and Governance Committee consider further more fundamental changes to the constitution over the next 12 months.
- On voting arrangements, the Mayor and Combined Authority are the primary decision makers. The Order creating the Combined Authority specifies that certain decisions must be taken by the Elected Mayor and that some decisions rest with the Combined Authority. The Constitution will reflect these legal requirements.

- Any matters that are to be determined by the Combined Authority are to be determined by a simple majority and that majority must include the vote of the Mayor, except as identified within the Order. When approving the Combined Authority's budget (but not the Mayor's budget) and setting a levy, the lead Member from each constituent Council must be in the majority vote.
- The Mayor will provide overall leadership and chair Combined Authority meetings. The Combined Authority's remit is the strategic economic development, housing, carbon reduction, skills, transport infrastructure and strategic and operational transport functions.

Following this, questions and comments raised by the committee included:

- Concerns were raised around if the Combined Authority could not function effectively. In response, members were reassured that the two Lead Members of the Combined Authority have a veto on any constitutional changes, in order to safeguard any issues that arise.
- The make up of the Business Committee (Advisory) and the proposed appointment process for the Chair.

Resolved –

That the proposals in relation to the proposed governance of the Combined Authority be noted and comments made be taken into account.

7 Harbour Services

Considered – Report of the Assistant Director – Integrated Passenger Transport, Licensing, PROW and Harbours to provide an overview of Harbour Services.

Some of the key points highlighted in the report are as summarised below:

- Following fact finding site visits to Scarborough and Whitby Harbours in September 2023, members gained an understanding of the significant challenges facing all of the harbours that now fall under the responsibility of North Yorkshire Council following Local Government Reorganisation.
- Whitby piers are subject to regular monitoring
- The Council has recently committed around £800k investment to develop design and investigation works for shovel ready projects at both Scarborough and Whitby Harbours. It is hoped that this investment will enable fully costed, shovel-ready schemes to be ready to access any further funding opportunities, which usually have a very short window for applications.
- The North Sea has experienced significant shellfish mortality over recent years, which has had an extensive impact upon the fisheries sector. In terms of the direct impact on the harbour authority, the harbour levies landing dues on shellfish landings, which is calculated as a percentage of the gross sales from the landings has shown a reduction in the quantity, and therefore value (£), of the shellfish landings, significantly impacting upon the harbours budget
- There is an appetite to investigate the clear commercial opportunities resulting from rapid expansion of the offshore wind industry, particularly in Whitby as it is the closest accessible harbour to the Dogger Bank windfarm site, and for Scarborough to service both the Dogger Bank and Hornsea development areas. Part of this expansion into this commercial sector may include the provision of a large boat lift and associated storage at Scarborough harbour (subject to business case and funding) to provide “out of the water” servicing, maintenance and inspection

facilities to commercial vessels.

- The exciting development plans for the Scarborough West Pier and the Maritime Training Hub at Endeavour Wharf, Whitby, are progressing and are expected to be formally submitted as planning applications in the near future.
- Overall, officers are very positive about the future of the harbours, with work to develop a new Harbour Strategy underway.
- Keen to ensure financial resilience of the harbours
- Thanks to the Harbours Team for their dedication and commitment to work in all weathers, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to ensure the smooth and safe operation of the Council's harbours and this team will be instrumental in taking the harbours forwards into the future.

Following this, questions and comments raised by the committee included:

- The proposal of a boat lift and associated storage at Scarborough harbour (subject to business case and funding) was felt to be much needed, to provide the ability to conduct "out of the water" servicing, maintenance and inspection facilities to commercial vessels.
- More detailed information was sought on the types of commercial opportunities it was felt could potentially be available to service both the Dogger Bank and Hornsea development areas.
- Given the reference of "risk of collapse" of the harbour infrastructure within the report, what kind of timescales is that based on?
- The options for the future operating model of the dredger and whether Scarborough and Whitby have priority in its operations over external dredging contracts.
- The effect of the recent stormy weather on the harbour infrastructure and whether potential solutions can be future proofed to reflect the changing climate..

As part of the debate and questions to the officers, it was recommended to Councillor Bastiman, as the Executive Member for Open to Business, that the committee supports the initial proposals to install a boat lift and associated storage at Scarborough Harbour and if external funding opportunities cannot be secured to progress this project, then subject to a viable business case, the Council should give consideration to funding the required works.

Resolved –

- i) To note the information within this report.
- ii) To thank the Harbours Team for all their efforts to ensure the smooth and safe operation
- iii) To recommend to the Executive Member for Open to Business, that the Transition (LGR) Overview and Scrutiny committee supports the initial proposals to install a boat lift and associated storage at Scarborough Harbour and that if external funding opportunities cannot be secured to progress this project, then subject to a viable business case, the Council should give consideration to funding the required works.

8 Bereavement Service

Considered – Report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory Services, to provide an

overview of the Bereavement Service, operating model and proposed future development.

Some of the key points highlighted in the covering point are as summarised below:

- The primary purpose of the bereavement service is to provide dignified funerals and cremation or burial of the deceased for the people of North Yorkshire. This service was previously carried out by district and borough councils prior to 1 April 2023 and has moved across to the new council.
- The Bereavement Service operates across the whole Council geography, with circa 25 staff based at four locality crematoria: Skipton, Stonefall Crematorium (Harrogate), Maple Park (Thirsk) and Woodlands (Scarborough)
- The current level of demand in North Yorkshire is approximately 75% of all deaths within the unitary authority. Further services are provided through opportunities for memorialisation of the deceased at both open and closed cemeteries, purchasing of burial plots and genealogical searches.
- The work of the Law Commission to review the laws on burial, cremation and funerary methods was highlighted and will be key to shaping the future direction of the service.

Following this, questions and comments raised by the committee included:

- There was a query around the change of operation of the metals recovery and recycling process detailed in the report, to switch from a Dutch to a British based firm, and the impact this could have on the Council's reduction of emissions through contracted transport activities.
- The capacity of the bereavement service across the county to cope with demand was asked about and assurances received.
- The potential business models that may be available for the bereavement service depending on the outcomes of the multiple Law Commission reviews and ultimately the decision of Government.
- The recent increase in popularity of direct cremations and what options there are to benefit from this.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

9 Standing items update

There were no updates to the standing items to report.

10 Work Programme

Resolved –

That the Work Programme be noted, pending further discussions on arrangements for future scrutiny.

11 Any other items

There were no other items of business.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 am.