

# North Yorkshire Council

## Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Monday, 10th June 2024 commencing at 10.30 am.

Councillor Andrew Williams in the Chair, plus Councillors Bryn Griffiths, Karl Arthur, Nick Brown, Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, Tim Grogan, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Subash Sharma, Malcolm Taylor and Phil Trumper.

In attendance: Councillor George Jabbour.

Officers present: Melanie Carr, Gary Fielding, Rachel Joyce, Robert Ling, Jonathan Spencer, Sarah Ridley and Penny Yeadon.

Apologies: Councillors Chris Aldred and Mike Schofield.

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

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### **1 Apologies for Absence & Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies were received from Councillors Chris Aldred and Mike Schofield.

### **2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 March 2024**

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024 be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4 Public Participation**

No public questions or statements were received.

### **5 Transformation Strategy**

Considered – A detailed presentation introducing the Council's transformation strategy.

Gary Fielding introduced the presentation giving a general overview of the ongoing work to transform services in the new council and drew attention to the added complexity of the timing of workforce restructures and their bearing on service transformation. He acknowledged there was still plenty to do, but confirmed the work was progressing well.

Robert Ling, Director of Transformation took members through the slides starting with an update on the progress to date with converging the services previously provided by the councils. Members were pleased to note that 95% of the workforce restructuring had been completed and requested that a list of key contacts in key services be circulated to all members, in particular they were keen to know who the appropriate contacts were as a

result of the restructure of Planning.

Attention was drawn to the details on how the Council intended to move forward. Members noted one of the aims of the transformation and change programme was to deliver stronger teams with the aim of improving performance, values and behaviours. Officers stressed the bringing together of 8 teams should not be underestimated and would require a huge cultural change across the new organisation. The importance of ensuring a focus on internal customers and improving the Council's outward looking focus was noted as was the importance of identifying the barriers to cultural change.

Members also noted the four key components within the council's target operating model and the specific role of councillors in regard to the customer and locality themes, recognising they could support the transformation process in a number of ways including communicating to the public the direction of travel.

Officers confirmed delivering fully the new operating model would require technology improvements and new ways of working and acknowledged the importance of keeping local councillors informed throughout the process.

Members went on to note the key steps within the approach to service convergence detailed in the presentation, and expressed some concern around the possible loss of experience and knowledge at district level and the need to build resilience in to the new teams was recognised.

Members agreed the Committee could help drive forward the customer theme and requested a future update from Margaret Wallace - AD Customer Revenue and Benefits on the plans for a common customer approach. They also queried the timeframe for delivery of the transformation programme noting the lack of a detailed timeline, which the Director of Transformation agreed to provide.

Resolved – That:

- i. The presentation be noted;
- ii. An update on the planned progression of the customer theme be brought to a future meeting;
- iii. A detailed timeline be circulated to committee members.

## **6 Annual Workforce Update**

Penny Yeadon - Head of Human Resources provided an overview of the detailed report presented, which included workforce data for the new Council. Members noted the complexity involved in workforce restructures and their influence on the timings of services transformations. They accepted there was still plenty of work to do but were pleased with the level of progress.

The Chair queried the sickness levels within the Environment Directorate and questioned whether there was any geographical focus. Members recognised there was a lot of frontline staff within the Directorate and the need to priorities their health and wellbeing, and in response officers agreed to provide a more detailed overview of attendance and wellbeing within that specific Directorate at a future meeting.

Members discussed a number of other issues e.g.:

- Succession planning – it was confirmed that recruiting social workers remained an issue;
- Apprenticeships – The plan to grow the Council's own environmental officers;

- Apprenticeship Levy – Members requested levy information be included in future workforce updates and baseline figures to enable future comparison;
- Hybrid working – Members queried the process for monitoring it and noted that individual team agreements were in place to ensure appropriate working arrangements were in place to optimise the delivery of services;
- Staff Retention – Members agreed the need to improve the culture of the organisation as it would help encourage staff to remain;

Members thanked officers for the detailed report and it was

Resolved – That:

- The update be noted;
- A detailed overview of attendance and wellbeing within the Environment Directorate be provided at the next meeting of the Committee on 9 September 2024.
- A further holistic update be provided in 12 months' time.

## **7 North Yorkshire Refugee Resettlement Update**

Considered – A report of the Assistant Director - Policy, Partnerships and Communities providing an update on refugee resettlement in North Yorkshire relating to the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Jonathan Spencer - NYC Refugee Resettlement Manager, presented the report and provided an overview of the background to, and an update on:

- The various individual schemes that made up the UKRS i.e. those for refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and the Ukraine;
- The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), for refugees regardless of their nationality but specifically children at risk and their families from the Middle East and North Africa region;
- The community sponsorship schemes in place across North Yorkshire;
- The UK-wide welcome programme to support the integration of new arrivals from Hong Kong

Councillor Kevin Foster expressed specific concern about the housing crisis in Richmondshire and the added difficulties that will come once refugees move out of their current MOD accommodation. In response, officers confirmed the Authority was working with the MOD on a local plan, actively seeking solutions. Members recognised it was national issue and there was a need for a central government policy.

Members went on to note:

- There were now a number of dedicated housing officers working with and providing support to refugees;
- The third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund was for extra families not rehousing those currently in MOD properties;
- Of the 460 individual refugees the majority had moved to private rental properties with the minority in social housing;

Members thanked the officer for his ongoing hard work, and it was

Resolved – That the annual update be noted.

## **8 Annual Review of Councillor Locality Budgets 2023-24**

Members received a report reviewing the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets in the financial year 2023/24.

Rachel Joyce, Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement introduced the report, and drew attention to 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 thanked the officers involved for their hard work in administering the scheme. However they were disappointed to note that a small number of members had spent less than half of their allocation and suggested that 3 months before the end of the annual scheme, group leaders be given an update on their members expenditure to date so that they may encourage those with a large outstanding balance to spend it.

Resolved – That the report on the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets during the 2023/24 financial year be noted.

Councillor Bryn Griffiths left the meeting at 12:04pm.

## **9 Notice of Motion - Increase Residents Right to Grow**

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Democratic Services) presenting information in response to a Notice of Motion at Full Council in May 2024 that sought resident's right to grow.

Members agreed there was likely to be much to consider in regard to the proposals within the Notice of Motion and agreed that officers should be given time to gather all the relevant information before reporting back to the Committee at its next formal meeting on 9 September 2024. This would enable the Committee to report back to full Council in November 2024.

Resolved – That information to support consideration of the Notice of Motion be brought to the Committee's next meeting in September 2024.

## **10 Work Programme**

The report of the Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer inviting Members to consider the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year 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 amended to include the additional items identified at the meeting.

## **11 Date of Next Meeting - 9 September 2024**

The meeting concluded at 12.28 pm.