

North Yorkshire Council

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Monday, 2 December 2024 commencing at 10.30 am.

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

In attendance: Councillors Carl Les and Barbara Brodigan.

Officers present: Melanie Carr, Gary Fielding, Brigette Giles, Sarah Ridley and Matthew Robinson.

Apologies: Councillor Nick Brown.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

25 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Councillor Nick Brown sent apologies and was substituted by Councillor George Jabbour.

26 Minutes of the Meetings held on 10 June 2024 and 9 September 2024

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meetings held on 10 June 2024 and 9 September 2024 be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a true record.

27 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

28 Public Participation

No public questions or statements were received.

29 Transformation Update

Considered – A progress report on the Transformation Portfolio activities, introduced by Gary Fielding, Corporate Director for Resources.

Brigette Giles, the new interim Director of Transformation provided an overview of her work history and the knowledge and experience she was bringing to her new role. She went on to provide an overview of the report, her perspective on progress to date and her insights on a way forward. This included an overview of:

- The two cross cutting themes as detailed in section 3.2 of the report that affected the whole organisation and required change.
- The projects and activities to be delivered to ensure the Council had the right processes, technology, and skills in place.

- A number of service specific programmes designed to deliver a significantly changed operating model. In particular, improving the Council's use of data to inform future decisions, improve preventive services and deliver early intervention.

Brigette Giles went on to note:

- 71 restructures had been undertaken to date across the organisations- two key areas still to be restructured were HR and Business Support
- The Council had not needed to rely on any external consultants to deliver the convergence work to date, which would have been costly to the Council if used.
- The need to ensure customers could continue to interact with the organisation in the way that best suited them.
- The two-stage approach required to bring about fundamental change within the organisation i.e. convergence (bringing together the 8 legacy councils into one new Authority and carrying out the necessary restructuring of staff) and transformation (delivering ambitious improvements to deliver the MTFS savings and ensure the successful long-term operation of the Council).

In response to Members questions, officers confirmed:

- Productivity would continue to be monitored via the same performance management structure, made easier by improved data gathering.
- There was an additional £1m budget allocated for the rollout of Windows 11, and the process of rollout included working with a charity to recycle end of life equipment.
- Introducing Windows 11 was a pre-cursor to amalgamating legacy IT systems.
- Residents concerns around communicating with, and receiving feedback from the Council were noted. It was recognised that not all residents liked transacting electronically and it was confirmed there was no intention to remove face-to-face.
- An IT Architecture road map for convergence works was in place and could be shared as part of the next Transformation update.
- There was a corporate willingness to invest more to address homelessness and opportunities were being sought.

In terms of what was required moving forward, Brigette Giles suggested:

- Improvements to the Council's website to make it fit for purpose, with the aim of providing a 360° view of a customer inquiry online for both the customer and the council.
- A change to the culture of the organisation – delivering a one-team ethos would likely take 4-5 years to achieve.
- An overarching vision for the next 5-10years to drive progress.
- A streamlining of the internal governance structure and processes to allow more focus on service delivery.
- Improved engagement and communication with the workforce - a new Plan was being developed.
- Senior management confidence to delegate decision-making needed building up.

Members recorded their thanks to Robert Ling the previous Director for Transformation, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The update report be noted.
- ii. The next Transformation Update include a specific focus on IT and a copy of the IT Architecture road map.

30 Workforce Update - Attendance and Wellbeing and Other Emerging HR Related Themes for new Council

Considered – A Human Resources presentation delivered by Sarah Ridley, Head of People & Organisational Development providing an update on attendance levels and wellbeing in the Environment Directorate, and an overview of the wider emerging HR related themes 18 months into the new Council.

Members considered the factors thought to be influencing the higher than expected non-attendance levels in the Environment Directorate, and the officer provided an overview of the actions taken to date to address them. In particular Members noted:

- The number of long-term sick employees (34) who had exited NYC since 2023, as a result of being managed through the sickness process.
- The improved recording of sickness – Members recognised the need for a consistent approach from middle management and the introduction of HR case workers to provide additional support.
- The steps taken to build up resilience within Teams in the Directorate e.g. loader to driver training.
- The increased engagement and marketing aimed at bringing younger people into the operational workforce.
- The contribution of Occupational Health
- The planned move to a 4-day week in waste (4x10hr days) which elsewhere had proven to reduce sickness levels - Members queried the expected reduction in sickness levels as a result of the move, and it was agreed this information would be circulated to committee members after the meeting.
- The age profile pathways available to provide alternative employment to older staff.
- The 45% feedback for the staff survey.
- The work undertaken to promote the organisation as an employer of choice.

Councillor Karl Arthur suggested the organisation would benefit from increased promotion of the health checks available to staff via Occupational Health.

In response to a Members query, it was confirmed that data on apprenticeships was included in the Committee's Annual Workforce Update, last received at the committee meeting held on 10 June 2024.

Having considered the actions taken to date to address attendance levels in the Environment Directorate, Members agreed they wished to monitor their effectiveness and requested a further update in 12 months' time. They also requested a breakdown of the reasons for staff leaving the organisation for the period from 1st April 2023 to date, and it was agreed this information would be circulated to committee members after the meeting.

Resolved – That:

- i. The update be noted.
- ii. An update on the effectiveness of the measures undertaken to address attendance levels in the Environment Directorate be provided in 12 months' time.

Actions Required:

To circulate information on the reduction in sickness expected as a result of the SR introduction of a 4-day week for operational staff within the Environment Directorate.

To circulate a breakdown of reasons for staff leaving the organisation since 1 April SR 2023

31 Council Plan 2024-28 Development Update

Members noted the progress report provided on the development of the Council Plan 2024-28 but agreed that without the draft Plan to consider alongside the report, it was not possible to comment and/or contribute. They suggested that future annual updates be timed to allow for the inclusion of the draft Plan.

Resolved – That consideration of the Council Plan 2024-28 be deferred to the next formal meeting of the Committee on 3 March 2025.

32 Resilience and Emergencies Annual Update 2023-24

Considered – A report of the Head of Resilience & Emergencies providing a progress update on incidents affecting North Yorkshire between 2023/24.

Matt Robinson, Head of Resilience & Emergencies introduced the report and provided an overview of the Gold Silver and Bronze commander posts for the east, west and central areas, and their role in times of an emergency. He also drew attention to the Corporate Emergency Planning Group work plan for 2024-25 shown at Annex A of the report.

Members noted the incidents that had taken place during 2023-24 and went on the question the number of Community Emergency Plans in place and whether that number had improved over the last year. In response it was confirmed that the number had decreased.

Members noted the development of a new Community Resilience Policy and the intention to invite Members to the planned community resilience workshops to be held in early 2025.

Resolved – That the annual update on Resilience and Emergencies be noted.

33 Report on Recent Motions at Full Council in November 2024

Considered – A report presenting information in response to a number of Motions received at full Council in November 2024.

Councillor Barbara Brodigan introduced the Motion on Youth Council Engagement providing an overview of her reasons for seconding the motion. She confirmed it was intended as a way to encourage more young people to engage on political issues. She acknowledged the other ways in which the Council was already engaging with young people, as detailed in the report, but went on to suggest more could be done.

Committee Members had mixed views on the proposal which included:

- Area Committees would be a better place for the Youth Assembly to engage as they could comment directly on issues affecting specific areas of the County.
- It would set a precedent if a specific group was identified as being allowed to submit a motion to full Council.
- It would be unfair to other groups.
- It could be considered a token gesture limiting the Youth Council to submitting a Motion only once a year.
- Young People are more engaged in politics than ever and so there was no need to proceed as proposed.
- The proposal created an age imbalance - what about groups representing older people.
- The full council meeting process would not be a good mechanism for encouraging young people to engage given its strict procedural rules.
- It should not be an issue allowing the Youth Council to submit one motion a year.

Given the mixed views, the Chair invited Committee members to vote on the proposal and the votes were as follows:

- 3 in favour
- 11 against
- 1 abstention.

Members went on to consider the second Motion on adopting appropriate means to ensure that policies and decisions made by the Council were properly informed by their impact on local communities, as introduced by Councillor Chris Aldred. He suggested the introduction of a similar assessment tool to that already provided on equalities and climate within the appendices of a decision making report.

The Scrutiny Officer read out a brief statement provided by Councillor Peter Lacey in his absence as follows:

I am aware that the measurement of community impact by Local Authorities and other public sector organisations is in its relative infancy and that it comes with potential risks. However, I believe that identifying and following best practice elsewhere would both minimise and outweigh these risks. For this reason I would welcome a measured and considered approach to this subject by officers but also believe that an appropriate way forward can be identified and agreed by Council within the suggested 12 month timescale. Not to do so could undermine the Council's still to be realised ambition of being the most local large Unitary.

Members went on to consider the information provided within the report and some expressed concern around the additional officer time it would require to assess community impact more thoroughly, over and above the information already being provided within decision making reports, particularly given the ongoing transformational work and that planned for the future, alongside 'business as usual' work.

It was recognised the proposal would add another layer of bureaucracy in a time when officers should be focussed on service delivery, and Members suggested it would be better to concentrate on the basics i.e. delivering a good functioning council, responding to public needs.

Councillor Chris Aldred drew attention to the options within the report at paragraph 6.2 and given Members' concern around officer workloads, proposed option (ii) as the appropriate way forward, which Councillor Bryn Griffiths subsequently seconded. Members voted on that option which showed 2 members in favour, 11 against and 2 abstentions.

The Committee went on to vote on the Motion proposal and the votes were as follows:

- 2 in favour
- 13 against

Based on the votes received on both Motions, it was

Resolved: That it be recommended to full Council that:

- i. The Motion on Youth Council Engagement is not supported.
- ii. The Motion on Community Impact is not supported.

34 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 2020 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 updated to reflect the additional items identified at the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12.37 pm.