

North Yorkshire Council

Scrutiny of Health Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 18 December 2024 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Andrew Lee in the Chair, plus Councillors Liz Colling, Nick Brown, Caroline Dickinson, Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff, Richard Foster, Sam Gibbs, Peter Lacey, Rich Maw, Heather Moorhouse, David Noland, Andy Paraskos, Andy Solloway, Andrew Timothy, Alyson Baker and George Jabbour (as substitute for Councillor Clive Pearson).

Officers present: Jon Clubb (Head of Parks and Grounds), Richard Marr (Highways Area Manager), Edward Maxwell (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Victoria Turner (Public Health Consultant), and Louise Wallace (Director of Public Health).

Apologies: Councillors John Mann and Clive Pearson.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

587 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted from Councillor John Mann, with Councillor Alyson Baker attending as substitute; and Councillor Clive Pearson, with Councillor George Jabbour substituting.

588 Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th September 2024

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2024, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

589 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Colling declared a non-registerable interest in relation to Minute 594 (Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023-24) as a member of the York and Scarborough NHS Foundation Trust Council of Governors, appointed through North Yorkshire Council.

Councillor Alyson Baker declared a non-registerable interest in relation to Minute 594 as a volunteer at a local vaccination clinic.

590 Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and gave a brief update on matters of interest outside of committee business.

A meeting had recently taken place with Mark Bradley (Acting Place Director, Humber and North Yorkshire ICB), following Wendy Balmain's retirement earlier in December. The Chair thanked Wendy Balmain for her support to the Scrutiny of Health Committee over the past several years and wished her the best. The meeting with the Acting Place Director had been positive, and the Chair looked forward to a productive working relationship.

The Chair sought volunteers for a Working Group, which would meet in late January to consider a response to the NHS Change Consultation. This would be arranged by Democratic Services and further details sent out in due course.

The Chair also met with the Deputy Mayor for Police Fire and Crime to discuss the Crisis Care Response matter raised by Councillor Haslam. A letter following up on that meeting was expected shortly and the Chair agreed to pass details of the response on to members.

591 Public Participation

No public questions or statements had been received.

592 Progress on issues Raised by the Committee

The Committee considered the report of the Principal Scrutiny Officer, updating on progress on issues and actions raised at the last committee meeting.

Resolved: That the committee note the report, and that no further action is required.

593 Review of Issue Referred from full Council on 21 February 2024 regarding the Council's use of Glyphosate and Neonicotinoids

The Committee considered a report from Jon Clubb (Head of Parks and Grounds), Richard Marr (Area Manager, Highways), and Victoria Turner (Public Health Consultant), outlining the Council's use of glyphosate and providing an overview of wider implications for public health. Councillor Brown, as the mover of the original motion, was also invited to speak after the discussion to reiterate his original points.

Currently glyphosate was used by Parks and Grounds for weed control in open spaces, and Highways on kerbs, footways, and paved areas. The information on the potential threat to human health was summarised, there being no consensus on its impact. Glyphosate was categorised as probable carcinogen by the World Health Organization in 2015, but other large-scale evidence reviews since that time had not confirmed this. The Bayer glyphosate case in the United States was referenced, and it was highlighted that in many of the lawsuits the issue was the failure to adequately warn users about health risks, rather than the health risks themselves.

Alternatives such as water and hot foam, vinegar, or manual treatment were discussed, but these had limited effectiveness because of their failure to attack the root systems, necessitating repeated treatments. Limited tests had been carried out by NYC, but service research concluded that overall, a move away from glyphosate-based treatment would cost between four and ten times as much.

Members discussed operational details of the council's use of glyphosate, and officers confirmed that use by Parks and Grounds was almost exclusively on areas of hard standing and important high-traffic areas, such as around gates and access points, rather than on green spaces and flower beds. For Highways use, the consequences of failure to control weeds were discussed, including potential for increased trip hazards on pathways, and eventual damage to structures as weeds became more developed.

Some members felt that even an inconclusive link to carcinogenesis represented an unacceptable risk, but others argued that the risk was in line with other known risk factors common in everyday life. It was felt that a rejection of glyphosate by NYC, at a time when it was not banned nationally and was still available commercially for use by the public, would be incongruous. The risk of weeds developing if alternative methods such as manual removal were adopted, and then being proactively sprayed by members of the public, was also considered. It was also felt that it would not be possible to meet the aims of the original motion in reducing the spend by £100,000 by ceasing purchase of glyphosate, since the alternatives to glyphosate were less efficient and more expensive and might lead to an increased cost. However, members remained concerned about any potential health risk and asked officers to keep the committee updated on regulatory developments if future research disclosed health risks.

The committee thanked Councillor Brown for his original motion, which had prompted a useful debate and highlighted important issues. Officers were also thanked for their time in researching and presenting this complex issue to the committee.

Resolved: It is recommended to Full Council that,

- a) having considered the reports, and having examined and debated the competing evidence on the safety and usage of glyphosate, the motion **not be upheld**.
- b) the Highways and Parks and Grounds teams' efforts to minimise usage of glyphosate, and explore alternatives, be supported.
- c) the efforts to reduce risk to operatives using glyphosate are minimised by the use of appropriate PPE, adequate and up-to-date training, and the use of Continuous Droplet Application where possible, be supported.
- d) it be noted that the reduction of the current total budget by £100,000, from its current level of £144,000 by ceasing purchase of glyphosate, cannot be supported as there are no appropriate alternatives which would maintain highways and parks at their current standards.

594 Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2023/24

The Director of Public Health (DPH) introduced the Annual Report for 2023-24, "Live, Age, Engage: healthy ageing in North Yorkshire". The report focussed on the voice of older people, and highlighted the four healthy ageing priorities for North Yorkshire:

- Health & reducing inequalities
- Housing
- Financial security & employment
- Making North Yorkshire an age-friendly place

The DPH thanked all members of the community who had submitted photographs which were used in the report, as these had helped give a real and relatable picture of healthy ageing around North Yorkshire. While the report contained all the data necessary to provide an accurate picture, efforts had been made to include qualitative information such as individual stories alongside photographs.

Members asked questions on diagnosis rates for dementia, which were 58.4% in North Yorkshire against a national average of 64.8%, and a national target of 66.7%, and the benefits of sport an activity in promoting wellbeing were discussed. It was agreed that an item could be added to the Committee's work program to consider dementia diagnosis rates, as a joint item alongside Adult Social Care. Further information was sought on budget savings arising from care reassessments, and the DPH agreed to provide further detail in a supplementary written answer.

Members thanked the DPH for the report, in particular praising its accessibility and relevance to everyday lived experiences of ageing in North Yorkshire.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

595 Independent Public Inquiry into the Government Handling of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Review of Module 1 Outcomes

Victoria Turner (Public Health Consultant) delivered a presentation to the Committee which outlined the response to, and local implications of, the publication of *Resilience and*

Preparedness (Module 1) by the UK COVID-19 Inquiry in July 2024. The main themes of the national report were highlighted, including the focus on an influenza-type disease, the complexity of emergency planning structures, and a failure to fully learn from previous outbreaks such as SARS and MERS. The Council's response to the first module was highlighted, which was gathered in the form of surveys from the Local Government Association and used to compile the report. The effect on staff was also discussed, particularly the stress imposed by reliving difficult experiences of the COVID period, and additional staff support had been made available to support those involved in providing evidence to the inquiry who were affected.

Members discussed the difficulties of acting as a councillor during the COVID period. Any future pandemic affecting North Yorkshire would be different since following Local Government Reorganisation there were no longer District or Borough Councils. The importance of training for councillors in such an event was also acknowledged, as well as the need for support to voluntary and community organisations at the local level. Members also considered the need for clear and open communication with residents, to build up trust with communities in the event of a future pandemic. Areas of risk for such an event were discussed, including a lack of shared health protection systems data and the role of digitisation in improving information sharing between organisations. The remaining uncertainty around the implications of Long COVID were also noted.

Officers highlighted the response to the COVID pandemic, with the local response following national guidance but also including additional work where it was felt local circumstances required an enhanced response, such as additional testing in care homes in North Yorkshire. It was emphasised that in any future event, the application of best public health practice would be at the heart of any response.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted, and that colleagues from Public Health be invited to give updates after the publication of future modules of the inquiry where there were significant local implications.

596 Work Programme

The committee's outline programme of work for 2024/25 was considered.

The recent report on the proposed Joint Place Committee with HNY NHS ICB which had been considered by the Executive on 17 December was highlighted, and it was agreed that a copy would be circulated to members following the meeting.

It was agreed that any future updates on Airedale Hospital would be circulated to members of the Skipton and Ripon Area Committee for information.

Resolved: That the committee approves the proposed programme of work and incorporation of suggestions for future items.

597 Date of Next Meeting

Friday 7 March 2025, at 10:00, in the Grand Meeting Room, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AD.

The meeting concluded at 12:50.