

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 February 2022

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF SCRUTINY BOARD

Scrutiny Board brings together the Chairs of the five thematic overview and scrutiny committees at the Council and the Older Peoples' and Young People's Champions. It provides an opportunity for a whole council view of scrutiny activity, which avoids gaps and overlaps and helps establish a lead committee for areas of joint interest. It also provides a forum in which the key performance issues for the Council can be reviewed and items for further scrutiny identified.

The scrutiny function was created to act as a check on and balance to the executive and it is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements.

There has been one meeting of Scrutiny Board since the last statement to Council.

The meeting of Scrutiny Board on 1 December 2021 focussed upon the scrutiny of the Q2 Performance and Finance Management Report, ahead of the members of the Board attending the meeting of the Executive on 7 December 2021. Some of the issues raised at the Executive meeting by members of the Scrutiny Board are highlighted below:

- The pressures around workforce shortages (adult social care and health), a backlog of elective surgery and diagnostics (which creates more complex social care needs in the community), and a fragile social care market were all noted
- Concerns were raised about the national hospital discharge policy, which was seen to be causing significant problems for social care as people have to be supported within 3 hours of social care being notified of their discharge
- The demands of the ongoing response to the pandemic were discussed, as was the potential impact of the movement of the adult social care focus from prevention and early intervention into more intensive and formalised forms of care as staffing shortages force a re-prioritisation. It was recognised that there is often a stark choice between social interaction/basic care and medical type supervision and care
- The adult social care recruitment campaign, that had been recently launched, was noted. A key issue, however, remains the relatively low pay and the lack of a clearly defined career pathway
- Concerns were expressed that the mental health and wellbeing of an undefined number of children and young people will have been negatively affected by the pandemic. Also, that the long term impact upon educational attainment and outcomes is not yet clear
- The increased number of inspections of schools being undertaken by OFSTED in the county was welcomed but questions raised as to whether we are able as a Council to fully assess how schools are performing in the county
- The risks to Council services arising from cyber-attacks was highlighted as was the need for all members of the Council to do what they can to prevent unauthorised access of their IT equipment, through on line scams such as phishing
- There was interest in understanding what more could be done to support the delivery of NHS Healthchecks, which had been adversely affected by the pandemic, as this was a key way of driving forward prevention and early intervention
- In light of the huge damage caused by storm Arwen to the national grid in parts of the North of England and Scotland, questions were raised about what more the Council could do in a leadership and lobbying role to urge the Government to protect and modernise this

vital infrastructure as extreme weather events appear to be more frequent and demands upon it are increased with de-carbonisation

- Questions were raised about call handling time and call abandonment in the Customer Service Centre and why these were relatively high for social care calls, particularly call abandonment by professionals.

At the meeting of the Scrutiny Board on 1 December 2021, members also received a presentation on the work of Healthwatch North Yorkshire and explored how links with that organisation and overview and scrutiny at the Council could be strengthened.

Healthwatch North Yorkshire is the local health and social care champion for all people across the county and was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. It is an independent charity (CIO), grant funded by NYCC and supported by a national body (Healthwatch England). It aims to gather information and data on people's experiences of health and social care, analyse it and then share with commissioners and providers. This then can help them adapt their services to better meet local needs.

Members of Scrutiny Board are next due meet on 18 February 2022. At that meeting, the Executive Q3 Performance and Finance Management Report will be scrutinised.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR STANLEY LUMLEY
26 January 2022