

North Yorkshire County Council

Executive

8 February 2022

Area Constituency Committee Feedback

1.0 Purpose of the Report

To bring to the attention of the Executive key issues considered at recent meetings of the Area Constituency Committees.

2.0 Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee – 6 January 2022

2.1 The Committee considered the Council Budget proposals for 2022/23, with a particular focus upon the area covered by the Committee. The following issues were discussed:

- The sensible use of the general working balance, within Reserves, for emergencies eg dealing with Covid, and finding capacity to deal with local government reorganisation, whilst recognising that the Council must be mindful, when setting its precept, of the ability of people to pay.
- The impact of inflation increases on the Council's finances.

2.2 The Committee considered an annual report about schools, educational achievement and finance, with a particular focus upon the area covered by the Committee. The following issues were discussed:

- North Yorkshire secondary schools were placed 138 out of 150 local authorities in terms of receiving national funding. The Authority continued to lobby about secondary schools' funding position.
- Covid had impacted on the development and implementation of targeted mainstream SEN provision as school leaders and governors had concentrated on the various changes to ensure education continued. It was hoped that some Head teachers, who might have been interested in pre-Covid times, would now starting re-engaging in conversations about further developing such SEN provision.
- In response to a significant increase in the number of children taken out school to be home educated, the Council had taken various actions, including putting together a team of elective home education advisors to satisfy itself that both the safety and the education provision for the young person was right.

2.3 In accordance with the County Council's Petitions Scheme, the Committee considered a petition entitled 'STOP The Station Gateway Project and the Pedestrianisation of Harrogate's Town Centre'. The petition was presented to the meeting by the petition organiser. A statement from Harrogate and District Cycle Action, which strongly supported Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme, was also presented to the meeting. Members commented that the wording of petition was unfair and biased, and that it contained factual inaccuracies. Members also commented that the overwhelming response, of the 15,500 people who had responded to the Harrogate Congestion Study Public Engagement, had called on North Yorkshire to introduce better facilities for walking and cycling and to boost public transport and that was exactly what the Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme sought to do. Members also noted that the Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme was due to be considered shortly by the Executive. The Committee decided that the action requested by

the petition should not be taken but that the petition should be taken into consideration as part of the analysis of the results of the second round of consultation on the Harrogate Station Gateway proposals and before a decision was taken on implementation of the Scheme.

2.4 Five Executive Members in attendance gave updates on key issues and priorities.

2.5 The Committee welcomed a report from the Healthy Schools Programme Manager and the Public Health's Health Improvement Manager, which outlined the work being undertaken to promote healthy eating amongst children, target children from deprived backgrounds, other work that the County Council could do, and suggestions about how local elected Members could assist in the work. Members had a lengthy discussion and offered encouragement and further suggestions to officers. The Committee decided to send its thanks to relevant Executive Members for all the work being done by the Public Health and Health Schools teams to improve nutrition and promote a healthy weight in children.

3.0 Skipton & Ripon Area Constituency Committee – 7 January 2022

3.1 The Rt Hon Julian Smith MP attended and provided an update on key local issues and some of the matters being actively considered at Westminster that may impact locally. This included: recognition of all the work that the Council had done with partner agencies to respond effectively to the Omicron variant over December, in spite of the challenges posed by some shortages in testing kit and also staff; the need to focus upon keeping schools and businesses open; and the promotion of vaccination and booster take up. The Rt Hon Julian Smith MP was clear that there needed to be the right balance between personal choice and compulsion, recognising that people may have legitimate reasons for not wanting to take up the offer of a covid-19 vaccination

3.2 Those Executive members in attendance gave an update on key issues and priorities. This covered: the continued response to the covid-19 pandemic; the impact of and mitigation of adult social care staffing shortages caused by increased infection, sickness absence and self-isolation rates; the recruitment campaign for social care workers, which had recently been launched; the work of the community support organisations; and the support that has been put in place for schools to help they stay open during this phase of the pandemic.

3.3 The committee also considered the Council Budget Proposals for 2022/23, with a particular focus upon the area covered by the committee. The following issues were discussed:

- The funding challenges faced by adult social care, proposed national reform of adult social care funding and the options for an adult social care precept on Council Tax
- The long term impact of the pandemic upon the demand for services and how they operate, with particular reference to pent-up demand for adult social care
- The role that the Council has to play in intervening in the social care market to help ensure that adequate supply is in place
- The impact of rising inflation, increased National Insurance contributions and possible pay claims upon the Council's operating costs
- The national funding formula for schools and how this did not take into account the particular needs of small, rural schools and some rural secondary schools with large catchment areas
- The development and implementation of the new unitary authority and what this would mean financially

4.0 Thirsk & Malton Area Constituency Committee – 12 January 2022

4.1 The committee also considered the Council Budget Proposals for 2022/23, with a particular focus upon the area covered by the committee. The following issues were discussed:

- School projections based on May 2021/22 Start budgets, including the number of schools in deficit and the value of those deficits
- The increasing number of schools in financial difficulty across the constituency, particularly primary schools due to a drop in pupil numbers.
- The likely impact of the rising costs of energy for schools – it was noted that the Authority negotiated a county-wide contract for that provision;
- The rise in HAS contacts and referrals
- The year on year decrease in reablement, and the need to turn that direction around;
- The increase in Living Well referrals overall between April and November 2021;
- The cost of care across the constituency area – it was noted that 66% of all placements were above the Authority’s rate, and that there was insufficient choice and capacity;
- The savings to the cost of ASC as a result of the number of informal carers across the UK – it was agreed there was a need for a more long-term fundamental report on the care sector;
- The ongoing/planned highways and transport schemes across the constituency area;
- The ongoing work to understand the assets and liabilities that would arise out of the formation of the new Unitary Council;
- The ongoing work to bring together the Council Tax support schemes of the District/Borough Councils as part of the Council Tax harmonisation work stream;

5.0 Scarborough & Whitby Area Constituency Committee – 19 January 2022

5.1 The committee also considered the Council Budget Proposals for 2022/23, with a particular focus upon the area covered by the committee. The following issues were discussed:

- School projections based on May 2021/22 Start budgets, including the number of schools in deficit and the value of those deficits - - it was noted that the Pupil Allocation Numbers for Scarborough Schools were due to be changed to improve the balance of numbers across the town;
- The increase in the number of schools in financial difficulty across the constituency area – the potential closure of more small rural primary schools due to a drop in pupil numbers was noted;
- The 12% rise in HAS contacts and a 13% rise in HAS referrals;
- The year on year decrease of 6% in reablement;
- The 42% increase in Living Well referrals between April and November 2021;
- The nature of the care market and the cost of care across the constituency area – it was noted that 54% of all placements were above the Authority’s rate, and that there was insufficient choice and capacity. The Committee sought reassurance that all options for addressing the cost of care to the Authority were being explored, including whether the Authority should consider becoming a direct provider again;
- The ongoing/planned highways and transport schemes across the constituency area.
- The rates of pay and availability of ASC workers remained an ongoing concern and the steps being taken by the Authority to aid staff retention;

5.2 The Committee also received a verbal update from the Executive Members present on their respective portfolio areas.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 That the Executive notes the report and considers any matters arising from the work of the Area Constituency Committees detailed above, that merit further scrutiny, review or investigation at a county-level.

Barry Khan
Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services)
County Hall
Northallerton

31 January 2022