

North Yorkshire County Council

Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Monday, 6th June 2022 commencing at 10.30 am.

County Councillor David Ireton in the Chair. plus County Councillors Chris Aldred, Karl Arthur, Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, Bryn Griffiths, Tim Grogan, Robert Heseltine, Tom Jones, Yvonne Peacock, Subash Sharma, Malcolm Taylor and Phil Trumper.

Officers present: Gary Fielding, Neil Irving, Chrys Mellor and Fiona Sowerby.

Apologies: County Councillors Nick Brown and Tony Randerson.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2022

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2022 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2 Election of a Vice-Chair

The Chairman asked for nominations for the Vice Chairman of the Committee, and Councillor Bryn Griffiths was nominated and seconded. Following a vote it was

Resolved -

That Councillor Bryn Griffiths be appointed Vice Chairman.

3 Apologies & Declaration of Interest

Apologies were received from County Councillors Tony Randerson and Nick Brown.

A number of personal, no prejudicial declarations of interest were made in regard to Agenda item 10 as follows:

- Cllr Chris Aldred, as his wife was a library assistant at Harrogate Library;
- Cllr Bryn Griffiths, as a trustee of Stokesley Library, and;
- Cllr Yvonne Peacock, as Director of Upper Dales Community Partnership

4 Public Questions & Statements

There were no public questions or statements received.

5 Introduction to Overview & Scrutiny & Draft Work Programme 2022/23

Considered – A report by Melanie Carr, Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer, on the overview and scrutiny process in place at North Yorkshire County Council.

Key points in the report included:

- The role of overview and scrutiny as a key check and balance for the decisions made by the Executive
- The opportunity to keep councillors and the public aware of key issues and initiatives
- The opportunity for overview and scrutiny to act as a critical friend to gain feedback and suggestions
- The different approaches to overview and scrutiny available, from task and finish groups to select committee style meetings
- The Committee's specific legal duty, under the Police and Justice Act 2006, to act as the crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committee
- The role of the work programme to plan out the work of the committee for future meetings, and;
- The future meeting and mid cycle briefing dates for the municipal year 2022-23

County Councillor Bryn Griffith raised his concerns about the growing need for, and dependence on, foodbanks across the county and suggested it be considered as a topic for a more in depth scrutiny review. Other Members also recognised the growing need and it was agreed that it be added to the Committee's work programme for its next meeting in September 2022.

Resolved – That:

- i. The report be noted.
- ii. An introductory report on the use of food banks etc across the County, be added to the work programme for September 2022.

6 North Yorkshire Refugee Resettlement Update

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

Neil Irving, Assistant Director - Policy, Partnerships and Communities 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 three community sponsorship schemes in place across North Yorkshire;
- The UK-wide welcome programme to support the integration of new arrivals from Hong Kong

Members queried the numbers resettled to date in each District, as shown in the table within the report, and it was confirmed that a rather than taking a scattered approach, the focus had been on a specific District at a time with the intention of ensuring the supporting facilities for refugees could be provided in the areas in which they were settled.

It was recognised this would provide those refugees with the necessary support and opportunities for self-help that were required.

It was confirmed that a decision was still awaited about the potential use of the former RAF base at Linton on Ouse for the initial settlement of Ukrainian refugees. It was also noted that weekly meetings were being held with the Home Office and other appropriate organisations e.g. the NHS.

Officers confirmed:

- 90% of the Syrian refugees had remained in the county with the remaining families moving to be closer to extended family members;
- There was a balance to be reached between integration and staying within their own communities;
- County Council resources were not necessary as Home Office support was provided through an agreed contractor;

In regard to the challenges, it was confirmed:

- Finding accommodation was always the biggest issue;
- Some difficulties with the Ukrainian Refugee Scheme as a result of there being no information on the refugees coming into the County ahead of their arrival, and not knowing who has arrived until a sponsor informs the Authority – members noted that whilst there was a Home Office database of those applying for a visa, the data was not always accurate and not all of them subsequently arrived as they often applied to more than one country and took the first offer they received;
- There were a small number of Ukrainian refugees who were entirely dependent on their sponsors as a result of the rurality of where they were housed and the lack of public transport;
- The degree of trauma experienced by some refugees;

Attention was drawn to those volunteer groups who were unable to provide housing but did want to provide other types of support to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, and it was confirmed they could volunteer via HFU@northyorks.gov.uk

Resolved – That the update be noted

7 Locality Budgets Annual Review 2021-22

Members received a report reviewing the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets in the financial year 2021/22.

Neil Irving, Assistant Director - Policy, Partnerships and Communities, Policy Partnerships and Communities introduced the report, which confirmed the Locality Budgets were in their seventh year.

Attention was drawn to the breakdown of the organisations and types of projects/activities that had been supported throughout the year, and Members were disappointed that some County Councillors had not fully spent their budget allocation, noting it was a shame for the communities that could have benefitted from that funding.

Neil Irving encouraged Members to spend their allocation earlier in the year to prevent a backlog in application towards the end of the financial year.

Resolved –

That the report on the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets during the 2020/21 financial year be noted.

8 Insurance Claims Analysis Report

Considered -

Members considered an update on motor and liability insurance claims, together with an analysis of the pattern and costs of public liability claims over the last 5 years, particularly for Business and Environmental Services.

Gary Fielding, Corporate Director Strategic Resources introduced the report confirming there was some overlap between the role of the committee and that of the Audit Committee who also received updates on insurance claims against the Authority.

Fiona Sowerby provided an overview of the commercial motor fleet claims which had remained relatively steady over the past three years and drew attention to Appendix A of the report. She also confirmed that there had been less claims made as a result of the reduced traffic on the road during the pandemic.

In regard to employer's liability, Fiona Sowerby confirmed that whilst the number of claims were lower than that of public liability claims, they could cost more.

Members noted:

- The value of the claims made per Directorate.
- The most common causes of the claims in BES and in particular, the rise in pothole related claims and the significant number of claims made by cyclists
- The number of successfully defended claims
- The benefits from analysing conceded claims to see how preventative systems could be improved

Members requested further information on the number of pothole/carriageway related claims and the number of those that related to cyclists, and Fiona Sowerby agreed to circulate that additional information outside of the meeting.

Members thanked Fiona Sowerby for her update and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The update be noted
- ii. A two yearly update be added to the Committee's work programme

9 Corporate Risk Register Update

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director Strategic Resources, detailing the significant amendments to the Corporate Risk Register since the Committee's last update received in March 2020.

Fiona Sowerby, Head of Insurance and Risk Management introduced the report highlighting the significant changes to the register since the last update report i.e. the new and significantly change risks, and the deleted risks.

Members noted the increased ranking of the Safeguarding Arrangements risk and the steps that had been taken to bring it back down. They also noted the links between Directorate Risk Registers and the Corporate Risk Register detailed in Appendix B of the report.

Members thanked Fiona Sowerby for the update and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The report be noted and;
- ii. A further update be provided in a year's time

10 Community Libraries Annual Update Presentation

Members received a presentation from Chrys Mellor, General Manager of NYCC Libraries, providing an overview of their work since the last annual update.

Chrys Mellor confirmed:

- The new Library Strategy for 2020-2030 was approved by Council in July 2020 with its new core priorities of Digital; Literacy & Learning; Health & Wellbeing; and Communities;
- There had been a partial re-opening between lockdowns with well over 1 million visits and 1.5 million books issued;
- A number of libraries had been refurbished;
- The Home Library service had continued throughout the pandemic;
- The Library Service had been working with the Police and Trading Standards on IT scams;
- Work on the collection and redistribution of IT equipment had continued, and more donations were required – 167 devices had been distributed to individuals up to March 2022;
- The Library Service continued to work closely with DWP to support job seekers;
- Six young people had been supported through the Kickstart programme;
- Free time on the library computers had been extended to 2 hours;
- Access to foreign newspapers was now being provided online;
- Libraries were nearly back to pre-Covid opening hours;

Chrys Mellor went on to give an overview of the priorities for 2022-23, as detailed in her presentation, and Members noted the challenges ahead, which included improving customer confidence, increasing volunteer capacity and volunteer retention, and funding.

In regard to the issuing of e-books, Chrys Mellor confirmed that books were downloaded to e-readers and automatically removed at the end of the loan period. This required use of the NYCC Libraries App.

Members recorded their appreciation for the work of library staff and volunteers, and it was

Resolved - That the annual Library Services update be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm.