

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Monday, 24th October 2022 commencing at 10.30 am.

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

In attendance: County Councillors Mike Jordan & George Jabbour (substituting for Councillors Tim Grogan and Phil Trumper respectively)

Officers present: Nigel Smith, Deborah Flowers, Marie-Ann Jackson, Keeley Metcalfe, Matthew Robinson and Barbara Merrygold.

Apologies: Councillors Tim Grogan and Phil Trumper. .

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### Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

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#### 11 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2022

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2022 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### 12 Apologies & Declaration of Interest

Councillor Yvonne Peacock declared an interest in Agenda Item 4 as a Director of Upper Dales Community Partnership. She also declared an interest in Agenda Item 5, as a fuel merchant.

Councillor Karl Arthur declared an interest in Agenda Item 5, as a Trustee representative at Selby District Association of Voluntary Service.

#### 13 Public Questions & Statements

Mr Mark Harrison presented his public statement in relation to Agenda Item 5 - An introductory report on the use of food banks, which read:

'I am not familiar with the workings of NYCC and apologise if I have overlooked or misunderstood something in this welcome report.

I am speaking as a concerned resident and volunteer for Hambleton FoodShare. I shall not forget the desperate reaction of a child rushing towards the carrier bags of food during my first delivery.

It is good that NYCC states: "*We have four key ambitions for the North Yorkshire of 2021.*"

- 1 Every child and young person has the best possible start in life;
- 2 Every adult has a longer, healthier and independent life;..”

It seems obvious, and consistent with these ambitions, that no one should be hungry or malnourished. However, it is not apparent that this is an agreed **Goal** of NYCC.

No statements about such a goal or when it should be achieved are evident. It is not clear what is deemed to be an acceptable number of hungry or malnourished people.

Over 30 years ago, a transformation of belief took place in leading high-hazard industries. Companies switched from: “Some accidents will happen” to “All injuries and incidents are preventable.” Lives and livelihoods were saved by adopting best practices from around the world.

Loss prevention requires effective and constant management of **Plans, Organisation, Measurement, Investigation** and **Auditing**. The report includes useful numbers and descriptions but does not include, or refer to, a description of these elements of strategy which are critical for the elimination of malnourishment.

It appears from item 4.10 of the report that the main immediate causes of hunger and malnourishment are insufficient money, lack of ability/knowledge and access. It is not known if there are sufficient **Resources** within the County to achieve the goal. No shortfalls are quantified. It is not known if sufficient action has been taken with local MPs & national government to obtain the required resources.

A chronically malnourished or stressed child may learn that their welfare and development is not valued sufficiently. This is the wrong sort of investment in the future.

*“The Child who is not embraced by the Village will burn it down to feel its warmth.”  
(African proverb)*

This entirely preventable, severe and chronic suffering must be averted. It appears that a radical change is required.’

In response, Marie Ann Jackson, Head of Stronger Communities confirmed the report to be considered at Agenda item 5 related specifically to an issue raised about the usage of food banks and other food support services across the county and whether the issue of increasing dependency should be considered further. She noted the report was there to help inform a decision on whether a more in depth scrutiny review should be undertaken, by highlighting information gathered from a range of food support organisations across the county over the past two years. She also noted that some of the organisations operated in the traditional food bank model, whilst others were relatively new, set up as a response to food insecurity – as distinct from food poverty – during the pandemic.

She went on to confirm the Stronger Communities team were carrying out some more detailed research regarding the efficacy of the range of food support offers available in the county - both with the organisations themselves and with the users of the services.

In regard to the two ambitions in the current Council Plan – “Every child and young person has the best possible start in life”; and “Every adult has a longer, healthier and independent life” Marie Ann Jackson noted they were underpinned by priorities for action, for example:

- A commitment to continue to focus on closing the disadvantage gap, particularly for children eligible for Free School Meals and Service Children; and
- Working with our partners to reduce disadvantage in the County; improve people’s physical health and promote positive mental health and wellbeing. We will build on existing sources of support around jobs, income and education so that people have the

same opportunities whatever their circumstances or where they live.

She acknowledged that food insecurity could manifest in a number of ways. For some it was driven by insufficient income to meet their basic needs, for others it was driven by access to affordable and healthy food, and for some their personal capacity to prepare food.

She drew attention to a government Food Strategy published in June 2022 and the ongoing work by NYCC's Public Health team to develop a North Yorkshire – whole system – plan. The plan would look at the issues of food security and sustainable production, healthier eating and nutrition and creating healthier food environments. She confirmed it was intended to involve a range of partners from public, business, health, education and community sectors, and noted that in recognition that work on those issues was an area that required additional resource, the new plan was being developed by a newly established team - Healthier Lives, Community and Economy unit, in Public Health.

She also drew attention to the Council's continued investment in a number of programmes and services that would contribute to the themes of the plan, which included:

- The Healthy Child Programme
- Healthy Schools initiative including healthy school zones
- Working with planners and advertisers in relation to healthy food options
- Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives - which reports annual progress
- The Director of Public Health Annual Report

She noted there was also a range of practical support available for people experiencing food or fuel insecurity through services such as:

- Free school meals – over 10,000 children currently
- Household Support Grants
- North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund
- The Holiday Activity and Food programme for children who are eligible for free school meals
- Grant support for food banks and other local voluntary sector food support initiatives
- The Warm and Well service that offer support and help in relation to fuel and energy costs

Finally, she confirmed the whole system plan currently being developed would be a means to bring a range of programmes and activities together under a strategic overview, with prioritised action plans, which in turn would help clarify the roles and contributions needed throughout the whole system in relation to both prevention activities and response services.

The Chairman thanked Mr Harrison for his contribution to the meeting and confirmed the issues would be further discussed as part of agenda item 5.

## **14 Stronger Communities Update**

Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Stronger Communities Programme introduced the report and provided an overview of the ongoing work with the Community Support Organisations still in operation. She drew attention to the review carried out in June 2022 and the important learning from it. She also confirmed:

- The evolution of the CSOs into effective place based hubs, contributing to both prevention and health and well-being services and pressures
- Financial provision was in place to continue to work with the network of CSOs over

2022 to support them through the transition

- The close work with the NHS on transformational mental health programmes;
- A majority of partners were keen post-pandemic, to continue their contribution to the support being given and evolve in to organisations that work alongside statutory services;
- There was to be a third round of the Household Support Fund

She also highlighted that whilst focussing on the work of the CSOs, the Stronger Communities team had continued with other post pandemic related work and its broader 'business as usual' work, as detailed in section 4 of the report.

Keeley Metcalfe (Resourcing Solutions Business Partner, Human Resources and Organisational Development (CSD) provided a further progress update on key elements of the Corporate Volunteering project, which included an overview of the 15 different services where volunteers were involved and the ongoing work to create one consistent process across all services.

Attention was drawn to a number of emerging issues of concern, as detailed in section 6 of the report, and a forthcoming event on 3 November 2022 to look at financial stability and amendment of the criteria to address the fuel crisis. It was noted that the main focus was on identifying additional funding streams for the voluntary sector.

Members suggested there should be a focus on retaining the volunteers who had started at the beginning of the pandemic.

Finally, it was confirmed that:

- Take up of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme for free school meal eligible children (DfE funded) was only around 25 – 30%.
- The conversion of schools to academies accounted for some of the reduction in volunteer numbers
- An evaluation of the providers for the Food for the Future programme had been completed but the evaluation of users was still ongoing
- It was not possible to provide volunteers numbers by geography, only by organisation / service area – Keeley Metcalfe agreed to share the data with Members
- The intention of a new Volunteer Policy would be to demonstrate that the Council had all the right services in place to ensure a consistent approach for all volunteers regardless of service area

Members thanked officers for their update and it was agreed that a further update be provided in 12 months time.

## **15 Introduction to the Use of Food Banks**

Considered: An introductory report of the Assistant Director Policy, Partnerships and Communities on the use of food banks.

Marie-Anne Jackson, Head of Stronger Communities introduced the report, which provided background to the issues across the county and context to the work of her team.

The report drew attention to the many forms of food support projects and programmes across the count, and the various national funding schemes that had become available over the previous 2-3 years.

In regard to the Food Bank Support Fund, Members considered the summary data of individuals and households supported by the 14 food projects in North Yorkshire between October 2021 and June 2022. They also noted the ongoing challenges detailed in the report, particularly those in the more rural areas where many residents were not on mains gas.

Members also noted the growing number of applications made to the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund over the last three years, and were pleased to note the ongoing jointly commissioned a piece of work with City of York Council to better understand the role and effectiveness of the various types of food support programmes operating across the region.

In regard to:

- The rising cost of fuel, Members noted the introduction of warm banks across the county, and County Councillor Nick Brown suggested the introduction of co-operatives in rural communities to purchase oil at a more competitive price;
- The use of food banks, Members acknowledged the stigma for some around other people knowing;
- Donations from businesses, Members recognised they were reducing, with bigger organisations working hard to reduce their waste and supermarkets cutting back on surplus;

Overall Members recognised there was an increase in demand at the same time as a decrease in provision. They therefore agreed they wanted to progress with a scrutiny review, in order to further their understanding of the different types of models and Identify best practice

The Chairman thanked the officer for her detailed introduction to the use of foodbanks and it was agreed that:

- i. A scrutiny review on the use of foodbanks be undertaken
- ii. A Task Group be formed to lead on the Review, made up of the following Members:  
Cllr Bryn Griffiths  
Cllr Kevin Foster  
Cllr Chris Aldred  
Cllr Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff  
Cllr Tony Randerson
- iii. All Committee Members would support the review by carrying out site visits to the projects in their own divisions to gather sample feedback from users. They also agreed a number of questions should be circulated, to support members in their visits and to enable a fair comparison of the feedback received.
- iv. Marie-Anne Jackson would provide a list of all the projects across the county to aid Members in their visits.

## **16 Parish Portal Members' Dashboard and Parish Council Engagement Update**

Considered – A report of the Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation, providing an annual update on the operation of the Parish Portal / Members' Dashboard and on Parish Council Engagement.

Nigel Smith - Head of Highway Operations introduced the report and provided a detailed

overview of the ongoing improvements made to the Parish Portal, which included an increase in list of services that could now be requested

Having noted the update, Members took the opportunity to raise their ongoing concerns about the lack of clarity on which complaints/issues were logged by a Councillor, the general lack of /minimal feedback on issues logged, and the sometimes incorrect update given on some issues – Councillor Tony Randerson gave street lighting updates as an example.

Deborah Flowers - Highways Customer Communications Officer reassured Members that their concerns were noted and that work continued to improve the timeliness and quality of the feedback given.

She confirmed that the new Members' Dashboard was now live and was an easy to use and effective tool to access real-time information regarding activity and service demand in individual Divisions. She also drew attention to the continued efforts to promote the Parish Portal and the available Members Dashboard training.

Members acknowledged the role and benefits arising from the weekly surgeries for Councillors, which provided an opportunity to receive progress updates on live issues across a division.

Recognising that Parish Council engagement was crucial, Members agreed KPIs around response times were important because if response times were poor, Parish Councils were likely to escalate their issue, which could further increase a Member's workload.

The Chairman thanked officers for their update and the Committee agreed to receive a further update in 12 months time.

## **17 Youth Justice Services Performance Update**

Considered – A presentation on the Youth Justice Service provided by Barbara Merrygold, Head of Early Help, Children and Families Service.

At the meeting Members received detailed information on:

- The blending of the key principles of the national youth justice practice model with the advanced, child-centred & strength-based approach used by Children's Services;
- The Service's leading role in the national development of NHS Framework for Integrated Care;
- New funding to deliver more early prevention, targeted support and psychologically informed support for high-need children;
- Performance Indicators for first time entrants, reoffending rates and custodial sentences;
- The fully established assessment model (MAP) and the extension of the MOU pilot to 31 March 2023;
- The Service's contribution to the development of national pathfinder services for complex, high-need children in the youth justice system or at risk of entry
- The development of a bespoke 'MoMO' offer for the young people involved with youth justice;
- The ongoing work as part of Local Government Reorganisation, and;
- The ongoing work to improve progress on reducing FTEs, numbers in Custody, and re-offending rates;

It was noted that the Youth Justice Service was now located within the broader Early Help offer, supporting a single, coordinated pathway for children presenting risky or challenging behaviour.

The Chairman thanked the officer for her update and it was agreed a further update be received in 12 months.

## **18 Resilience & Emergencies Update**

Considered – A presentation from the Head of Resilience & Emergencies providing an overview of the team's 2022/23 progress and the work being undertaken to plan and prepare for Local Government Reorganisation.

Matthew Robinson also provided a brief overview of the incidents that had occurred since the last update report, and of the North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum – its aim and structure.

Members noted there was to be a number of changes to the legislation governing the response to major incidents. They also noted the ongoing work to ensure business continuity post LGR vesting day

In regard to future annual reports, Members agreed they wanted to receive an overview of any further changes to the legislation governing the response to major incidents, changes partnership arrangements, and a general de-brief on the lessons learnt for any major incidents.

Members discussed the benefits of communities having emergency plans in place to support them in dealing with the first 48 hours following an incident. They also recognised the risk associated with a reliance on wi-fi as a result of the switch from analogue to digital telephony. Members suggested a crib sheet with telephone numbers for key officers/service teams and external partners, would be helpful for all members.

The Chairman thanked the officer for his report and it was agreed a further report be provided in 12 months.

## **19 Work Programme 2022-23**

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 noted for the remaining meetings in the 2022-23 municipal year.

The meeting concluded at 1.40 pm.