

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

22 February 2023

STATEMENT OF THE CORPORATE AND PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Since the Chairman's last statement to Council in November 2022, the Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met once on 5 December 2022, when the following items were considered:

- Property Services Bi-annual Performance Update
- Progress update on implementation of Council Plan Priorities
- Overview of progress with achieving the Council's new Equality and Diversity objectives
- Update on the Operation of the Customer Portal

In regard to Property Service, there were in-depth discussions around the following:

- The planned programme of review and rationalisation of council-owned properties to be undertaken after vesting day, with queries raised about the future of district and borough council properties and the use of the existing County Hall site
- The liabilities and risks associated with the properties inherited by the new unitary council
- The complexities involved in the refurbishment of the Grand committee room at County Hall

In regard to the implementation of Council Plan Priorities, Members noted:

- The lack of any clear references to Councillors in the Council Plan given the key role they play in their Electoral Divisions
- The need for a more detailed explanation of how the new unitary council will be locally responsive and accountable, and the role community networks will play – would their role be negated by Parish and Town Councils or was there a risk that community networks would undermine Parish and Town Councils. Also, the role Members would play in establishing and developing community networks
- Concerns that the 'Let's Talk' campaign was not as open and transparent as it could have been and that key aspects of how the new council will work were not covered
- The section on the economy did not mention the inter-dependencies with neighbouring authorities
- There was little or no mention of sustainable housing in the plan.

In regard to the Council's new Equality and Diversity objectives Members discussed:

- The challenges associated with delivering equality in access to services in a county as sparsely populated as North Yorkshire
- The importance of understanding what people's needs were and working to prevent discrimination, and the need to ensure that key pieces of work on equality and diversity undertaken by the districts and boroughs were not lost as the new unitary council was formed.

Finally, in regard to the operation of the Customer Portal, there were in-depth discussions around the following:

- The length of time that people had to wait until phone calls were answered and also the number of abandoned calls
- The need to ensure that telephone access was still available to residents as not everyone could use or had access to IT
- Whether there was the capacity to ensure that all services continued to be supported once the new unitary council was established.

County Councillor David Ireton
Chairman, Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

10 February 2023