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North Yorkshire Council

Transition (LGR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 19th June, 2023 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Malcolm Taylor in the Chair plus Councillors Philip Broadbank, Nick Brown, Caroline Dickinson, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, George Jabbour, John Mann, Bob Packham (Substitute) and Stuart Parsons.

Councillor Andrew Lee attended virtually.

Officers present: Robert Ling, Margaret Wallace, Sarah Foley, Trudy Forster, Nicki Lishman and Will Baines.

Apologies: Councillors Melanie Davis, Bryn Griffiths, Heather Moorhouse, Clive Pearson, Kirsty Poskitt and John Ritchie.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair, Councillor Malcolm Taylor, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Griffiths, Ritchie, Davis (substitute Councillor Packham), Poskitt, Moorhouse and Pearson.

Councillor Lee joined the meeting virtually using Microsoft Teams.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 January 2023

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Malcolm Taylor declared a personal interest in item 7 as his wife is employed in Customer Services at North Yorkshire Council.

4 Public Questions or Statements

No public questions or statements were received.

5 Verbal Update from Robert Ling, Director of Transformation on the LGR Transition

Robert Ling, Director of Transformation, attended to provide an update on the overall transition process in the lead up to vesting day and the work now starting to get underway to transform service areas.

Some of the key points highlighted in the presentation are as summarised below:

- Following a relatively smooth transition to bring 8 organisations together to form the new North Yorkshire Council through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), with achieving safe and legal the priority, attention has now turned to learning lessons for the future.
- The transition to the new council did not overstretch in its aims, leading to fewer issues on or around vesting day.
- Following an initial consolidation period after 1st April, there is now a 'Convergence' phase to deliver an aligned structure, budget, systems and process, before a gradual move into 'Transformation and delivery'.
- Workshops will take place over the summer with senior managers to agree the transformation priorities and budgets.
- Although eight councils have merged to become one new council, there are still eight councils now operating under the veneer of one new authority.
- All staff across the organisation have been asked to submit current 'niggles' that need fixing since LGR to try and iron out issues, both major and minor, that have arisen.

The following points were then discussed in the debate:

- The major improvements required to a number of corporate systems e.g Finance and ICT to ensure that they are fit for purpose and working in the way needed for the future.
- A request was made for elected members to be kept updated on ongoing issues related to the new council, to enable prompt responses to residents' queries.
- It will be key to ensure that best practice from the predecessor councils is utilised as part of the service transformation process.
- What happened for those managers who failed to complete the managers checklist?
- Issues experienced by residents trying to pay North Yorkshire Council by phone.
- Reporting issues via the new council website 'Contact Us' online form has proved mixed, sometimes the incorrect response is provided.

It was agreed that the update from Robert will become a standing item for future committee meetings.

Resolved –

That the verbal update be noted and that the update become a standing item for future meetings.

6 Developing a staff culture at North Yorkshire Council

Considered – Presentation by Trudy Forster, Assistant Chief Executive for HR and Business Support on developing a staff culture within the new North Yorkshire Council (NYC).

Some of the key points highlighted in the presentation are as summarised below:

- The work that was undertaken prior to Day 1 of the new council, such as holding focus groups, webinars, pulse surveys and workshops.
- The creation of new staff values (Inclusive, Ambitious, Creative, Together) and behaviours of the new council, with colleagues from all former councils involved in developing them.
- The employee and employer commitment that links to the overall 'Our People' Strategy. The priorities include a commitment to establish a new culture.
- Resources and induction materials have been developed for all staff to use, to

- support managing change, health, wellbeing and resilience to embed a new culture.
- The creation of a hybrid working policy for staff, asking teams to meet the requirements of the service.
- Next steps include supporting the transition of teams to deliver services, engaging with staff and managers, as well as updating members on staff culture and work to 'Establish One New Council' priority.

Following this, questions raised by the committee included:

- How the success of embedding a new staff culture and the values and behaviours will be measured?
- The future of hybrid working arrangements within the new council?
- Supporting former district and borough council staff to feel part of the new council and initiatives to help progress this.
- The use of the assets that the new council has inherited as a result of Local Government Reorganisation and how they can be best utilised.
- Whether TUPE arrangements still applied to the former district and borough council staff?
- A request to see a sample NYC staff contract

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

7 Customer Services overview

Considered – Presentation by Margaret Wallace, Assistant Director for Customer, Revenue and Benefits and Sarah Foley, Head of Customer Services.

Some of the key points highlighted in the presentation are as summarised below:

- The aim of customer services is to act as one council, with one front door from day one so that the customer experience is as seamless as possible.
- There are 230 customer advisors within the new council, but they are all still situated within their local areas.
- The new county-wide service is aiming to embed customer insight and experience, planning and forecasting, data and reporting and continual improvement.
- Safe and legal was achieved at day one, with a lot of work achieved in the build up to day 1. Improvements will continue as services transform, with opportunities to link services together for face to face customers.
- There is a lot of complexity involved to ensure that a customer can journey to the right information or person in the right location that can help.
- Top demand areas for face to face customers include making payments, housing enquiries and waste and recycling.
- On the phone, demands include council tax, waste and recycling and highways
- From April to May improvements have been made, with 8% more calls handled and the rate of abandoned calls dropping by 34%.
- Also from April to May, the average time to answer calls is 42 seconds quicker, with the average time to abandon calls 31 seconds quicker.
- The new 'Contact Us' online form has been used over 6,000 times to date, which provides vital customer data insight to make changes to services. Since the feature was launched, 900 changes have been made to improve the customer journey.
- A website chatbot supports customers 24/7, with enquiries since vesting day including bin collection day, garden waste, council tax, general waste and recycling.
- Benefits of a county-wide service include: increased opportunities for customers to access services in one contact; using expertise to problem solve and work together on customer journey mapping; an intelligence led approach using insight from data and feedback; opportunities to flex as a function to better meet changing and

evolving demands.

- Challenges for the new customer services team include the differences in the technology used across the county, with no one central CRM system and a culture change required with the new NYC website looking and feeling different due to bringing eight legacy sites together.
- Next steps include: looking at options for one CRM system; improving customer journeys; simplifying information on website; using feedback to refine tools and developing a consistent customer offer.

Following this, questions raised by the committee included:

- Use of the safety net team to triage phone calls in the initial first few weeks of North Yorkshire Council.
- Ways of improving the average response time to answer phone calls.
- Issues with the phone software provider.
- The continued use of the legacy phone numbers and how these will be phased out to leave the new 0300 number.

Resolved – That the report be noted and an update be presented to the committee in six months at the December 2023 meeting.

8 Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer asking the committee to confirm, amend or add to the work listed in the Work Programme.

A report on the planning service for North Yorkshire Council was requested for the September meeting.

Further updates on LGR savings, CRM system and the Finance system were requested.

Resolved –

That the work programme be noted.

9 Any other items

There was no further business.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 pm.