

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Monday, 5th June, 2023 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, Tim Grogan, Robert Heseltine, Tom Jones, Yvonne Peacock, Subash Sharma, Malcolm Taylor and Phil Trumper.

In attendance: County Councillors Carl Les, David Chance and George Jabbour.

Officers present: Rachel Joyce, Trudy Forster, Jonathan Spencer and Hazel Smith.

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

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### **36 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 March 2023**

Members identified a typographical error in the draft Minutes. It was also noted that the meeting held on 6 March 2023 was not a remote meeting as stated, and that it should have been noted as an in-person meeting.

In addition, Councillor Karl Arthur asked that his attendance be updated to record that he was present at the meeting.

**Resolved** – That subject to the amendments identified at the meeting, the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **37 Apologies for Absence & Notification of Substitutes**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **38 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Chris Aldred declared a non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 – Annual Update on Library Services, as his wife was employed by the Library Service.

### **39 Public Participation**

There was no registered public participants.

### **40 Annual Review of Councillor Locality Budgets 2022/23**

Members received a report reviewing the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets in the financial year 2022/23.

Rachel Joyce, Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement introduced the report, which

confirmed the Locality Budgets were in their eighth year.

Attention was drawn to the breakdown of the organisations and types of projects/activities that had been supported throughout the year.

Overall, Members were pleased to note that more locality budget monies had been spent than in the previous year and thanked the officers involved for their hard work in administering the scheme. In response to the cost of living crisis, they noted that there had been 32 allocations made totalling £61,900.

Councillor Phil Trumper drew attention to an error in Appendix 2 of the report in which it showed he had given a grant of £32,500 for the fireworks display at the Whitby Christmas Festival event, which should have read £2,000.

Councillor Subash Sharma queried the protocol for the remaining budgets at the end of the financial year, and it was confirmed the rules did not allow for roll over of any remaining balances. He asked whether the scheme could be adapted to allow for it.

Councillor Bryn Griffiths noted the funding allocated by Members acted as seed funding and questioned whether it was known how much it had generated.

#### **Resolved –**

That the report on the operation of County Councillor Locality Budgets during the 2022/23 financial year be noted.

## **41 Workforce Report**

Trudy Forster - Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support) provided an overview of the detailed report presented, which included baseline workforce data for the new Council. She focussed on section 3.6 of the report containing a series of tables containing baseline data on NYC since 1 April 2023. Specific attention was drawn to the following:

Table 4 – The types of contracts held by employees. It was noted that it was healthy for an organisation to have a range of contract types. Also that officers from the District/Borough councils had been Taped over on their existing terms and conditions.

Table 8 – The data on gender by Directorate reflected the national picture.

Table 11 – There was likely to be some under reporting of disability.

Table 14 – NYCC turnover in 2022/23 was 15% - a healthy turnover would be around 10-13%.

Table 16 - Sick days/FTE was increasing across the public sector

Tables 18 & 19 – NYCC had its own 'grow your own' Apprenticeship Scheme.

Table 20 – the Graduates at Ryedale District Council had been recruited by NYCC and seconded out to Ryedale.

Table 25 – Demand continued to outstrip supply in each of the hard to fill posts.

Members raised the following queries:

- What steps were being taken to increase the number of men working in schools?
- Were staff doing too much when working from home and not striking the right work/life balance?
- What was the gender mix across the various contract types, and what was being done to address the imbalance at the various level of management etc?

In response to other queries, Trudy Forster confirmed the following:

- Developing apprenticeships in Planning was a key part of the plan to address the

ongoing vacancies in the service.

- the new Hybrid Working Policy was now in place - data on its implementation would be available by September 2023.
- Sickness was increasing but was still below the national picture.
- The area of sickness of most concern was that due to stress/depression/anxiety – a number of employee assistance programmes were available to staff together with resistance training. Members requested that the Policy on sickness be circulated after the meeting.
- The authority was not spending as much as others on agency workers.

Councillor Richard Foster suggested there had been no real integration of staff at the Craven district Council offices, with ex Craven staff and NYCC staff using separate floors.

Councillor Malcolm Taylor welcome the improved situation regarding social worker recruitment and retention.

Councillor Michelle Donohue -Moncrieff highlighted her concerns about the holding of vacancies whilst the new council restructured its service teams. She noted the added strain it placed on the remaining staff, as a result of the increase to their workloads and the longer term effect it could have on their productivity.

Members thanked Trudy Forster for her detailed report and requested that she pass on the Committee's thanks to all staff.

**Resolved – That:**

- The update be noted
- A further update be provided in 12 months' time

## **42 North Yorkshire Refugee Resettlement update**

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

Jonathan Spencer - NYC Refugee Resettlement Manager, 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, and the proposed new scheme in Scarborough and Thirsk.;
- The UK-wide welcome programme to support the integration of new arrivals from Hong Kong

Members noted the following:

- The Refugees' Council was now providing support for 3 years
- Volunteer support remained good across North Yorkshire
- It was unlikely the UKRS would be completed next year – still awaiting a response from the Home Office on new cases;

- Payment by Government to local Authorities for the resettlement support provided to individuals was well behind schedule – members queried the exact amount owed to the Authority.
- It was estimated there was a further 4000+ afghanis eligible for the Scheme.
- Another ten families were scheduled to come to Catterick Garrison, with the existing nine families moving on to permanent homes.
- Many lessons had been learnt from the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.
- The placement of refugees across the old district areas was a planned approach to ensure access to and best use of the available resources, which is why some areas had taken more than others.
- The bridging hotel in Scarborough was still open with 80-90 residents who would have to leave by 16 August 2023. There was some concern that not all of those residents would be re-housed by that date. The policy regarding evictions was the responsibility of the Home Office, and there was some concern that some could be declared homeless as of 16 August 2023.
- Only one family in the hotel had confirmed they wished to stay in Scarborough. Many were unwilling to settle anywhere other than Manchester/London/Birmingham - work was ongoing to promote other areas.
- Mental health issues were a concern the longer residents are in the hotel. Those families with Mental Health issues were prioritised.
- Some families were very large (12+) and had specific needs, which meant finding suitable housing often proved difficult.
- Language remained the main barrier to employment – with English lessons available online. Written skills were not good, and support was needed regarding interview techniques
- The lack of education for women in Afghanistan was a factor
- Employment was slow but steady with most of the men in the hotel were in work.
- Business start-up grants of £2K were available – more business mentors were needed.

Members thanked the officer for his ongoing hard work, and it was

**Resolved** – That the annual update be noted

#### **43 Annual Update on Library Services**

Members received a presentation from Hazel Smith, General Manager of NYC Libraries, providing an overview of their work since the last annual update.

Members noted the breakdown of library provision provided in Hazel Smith's presentation and the following:

- 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;

She went on give an overview of the priorities for 2023-24, as detailed in her presentation, and Members noted the challenges ahead, which included improving customer confidence, increasing volunteer capacity and volunteer retention, and funding.

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

**Resolved** - That the annual Library Services update be noted.

#### 44 Notice of Motion on PFCC to Resign

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Democratic Services) presenting information in response to a Notice of Motion at Full Council in May 2023 that sought the resignation of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC).

Councillor Bryn Griffiths introduced the report as the proposer of the motion and drew attention to the options in the report at paragraph 6.1. He confirmed his Motion was not political but rather a reaction to the poor performance identified in the recently published reports of His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). He also expressed disappointment at the initial response of the PFCC when she had expressed surprise at the findings of those reports and suggested her monitoring of performance must have been lacking given her level of awareness of the issues.

Councillor Malcolm Taylor suggested the Motion was fundamentally flawed as it was not the role of the Council to hold the PFCC to account, but rather that responsibility laid with the Police Fire & Crime Panel (PFCP). Other Members agreed the PFCC’s performance was the responsibility of the PFCP including calling for the resignation of the PFCC should they deem that an appropriate response.

With that in mind and noting the planned special PFCP meeting on 21 June 2023 at which the Panel would focus on the PFCC’s performance in relation to the HMI inspection outcomes, and the progress being made etc, the Committee agreed no further action was required in relation to the Motion.

However, given their remit of scrutinising crime and disorder, members of the Committee agreed they would like to invite the PFCC, the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer individually to attend future meetings of the Committee, and agreed to add their attendance to the Committee’s work programme.

**Resolved** – That:

- No further action be taken in response to the Notice of Motion.
- The work programme be updated to include the attendance at future meetings of the PFCC, the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer

#### 45 Work Programme 2023/24

***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 amended to reflect the discussions at the meeting and to include any additional items identified.**

**46 Date of Next Meeting - 24 July 2023**

The meeting concluded at 12.53 pm.