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## North Yorkshire Council

### Executive

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 29th August, 2023 commencing at 11.00 am.

Councillor Carl Les in the Chair plus Councillors Derek Bastiman, Simon Myers, Janet Sanderson, David Chance, Keane Duncan, Greg White and Annabel Wilkinson.

In attendance: Councillors Alyson Baker, Barbara Brodigan, Caroline Dickinson, Karin Sedgwick, David Staveley, Paul Haslam, Malcolm Taylor, Andrew Williams, George Jabbour, Cliff Lunn, Heather Phillips and Bryn Griffiths.

Officers present: Karl Battersby, Will Boardman, Stuart Carlton, Gary Fielding, Richard Flinton, Anton Hodge (virtual), Barry Khan, Daniel Harry, Will Baines and Nic Harne.

Apologies: Councillors Gareth Dadd and Michael Harrison (both attended virtually)  
Richard Webb and from the O&S Chairs Councillor Andrew Lee.

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

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#### **302 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gareth Dadd and Michael Harrison, who attended virtually.

Richard Webb gave his apologies, Anton Hodge attended virtually as substitute.

From the O&S Chairs, Councillor Andrew Lee gave his apologies.

#### **303 Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 August 2023**

##### **Resolved –**

That the public Minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **304 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Michael Harrison declared an interest at agenda item 5, as an employee of one of the organisations listed in Treasury Management Appendix A. He confirmed he had a dispensation from the Standards Committee enabling him to remain in the meeting and vote.

Councillor Michael Harrison also declared an interest in agenda item 5, as a family member is employed in Health and Adult services. He confirmed he had a dispensation from the Standards Committee enabling him to remain in the meeting and vote.

#### **305 Public Participation**

There were no public questions or statements.

## 306 Q1 Performance Monitoring and Budget report

Considered – A joint report of the Chief Executive and Corporate Director – Strategic Resources.

Councillor Carl Les introduced the Quarter 1 Performance and Budget Monitoring report.

Councillor David Chance provided a summary of the new style performance report for the quarter one reporting period of North Yorkshire Council. The report covers the work of the former County Council services, plus the services and responsibilities transferred across from the former district and borough Councils to the new authority. The format of the report has moved to a directorate-based style, but with the KPI data maintaining its link to the five Council Plan ambitions. Consolidating data from the seven former district and borough councils into one is a demanding task, given that the methods of collection, definitions and systems differed slightly across the organisations. There are one or two data gaps, but these will be filled as the report evolves over time to be able to allow further comments on trends and hotspots.

Overall, performance remains strong, though there were teething problems in Customer Services as a result of the merger of eight telephone services and teams into one, as well as launching one new website for North Yorkshire on vesting day. Progress with a Devolution Deal for York and North Yorkshire is ongoing, and cost of living pressures are continuing to bite.

### Central Services

Councillor David Chance introduced the section on the Central Services directorate, highlighting the almost 250,000 customer interactions during the first three months of the new North Yorkshire Council, of which 71% were via telephone, with the remainder split across other channels. In the top reasons for calling were: Council Tax, Waste Collection, Housing, Parking and Roads. Customer contact by telephone is important but is labour intensive and may lead to increased call waiting times and call abandonments at peak times. Since vesting day, Customer Services have improved call handling times considerably.

Service and transformation plans are currently being developed by all appointed Assistant Directors and teams to identify any opportunities for further change. This will aim to make services more effective and efficient. This will also allow any actions that require additional corporate resource to be prioritised and supported.

On Homes for Ukraine, during this first quarter we have seen a rise in the number of single guest arrivals joining existing family members in North Yorkshire. The number of guests still living with a sponsor is approximately 616, reducing from 733 in Q4 2022/23. Since the start of the scheme, 720 guests who initially arrived in North Yorkshire have moved on from their sponsors' accommodation.

In quarter one of the reporting year, North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund dealt with 2,892 applications for assistance, with a 92% approval rate. The quarter one total spend this year was £344,135, with 40% on food and energy vouchers and 60% on standard awards. Also a total of 45,236 households in North Yorkshire received support under the third phase of the Household Support Fund.

In response to Scrutiny Board members questions, it was confirmed that:

- The collection of customer satisfaction data is being explored, but it was noted that the volume of calls was a dramatic increase compared to what the former county council previously dealt with. Some better qualitative measures were inherited from

the former district and borough councils, so officers are looking to replicate that across the rest of the county as well as a dashboard to show data across all contact channels.

- A strategy is in place to reduce agency staff in Planning, with a large recruitment campaign taking place to avoid a reliance on temporary staff in the future.
- The Council Tax collection rate data is to be looked at again to provide meaningful data for the audience. In general, the overall collection rate is good at the current time.

### **Health and Adult Services and Public Health**

Councillor Michael Harrison gave a summary of the performance data, highlighting the increase in the number of referrals to adult social care teams following the changes to the national hospital discharge pathways made during the Covid-19 pandemic. Short-term placements remain significantly high compared to pre-pandemic, with the use of temporary beds resulting in a higher cost of care and a detrimental effect on recovery.

Workforce availability remains a concern until a long-term plan is in place nationally for adult social care. The reablement teams activity is mixed, with resource engaged in delivering routine domiciliary care because of a lack of provision in the care market.

On Public Health, referrals into the North Yorkshire Adult Weight Management service are encouraging and drug and alcohol support service interventions are increasing, but with wait times remaining low.

Councillor Caroline Dickinson asked about the NHS Health Checks and what can be done to encourage more people to take up these invitations. Councillor Michael Harrison responded that further digging was needed to understand the real reasons why health checks may not be taken up, particularly with the prevention agenda in force.

### **Children and Young People's Service**

Councillor Janet Sanderson gave a summary of the performance information, noting the increase in demand for front door services. Although the service is under pressure, it is considered to be coping and repeat referrals are falling. Concerns remain over the increase in the number of children in care, and particularly the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers. To compound this, the foster care service is operating at 99% of capacity, with recruitment difficult. Changes to legislation in supported lodgings in the autumn will require an additional Ofsted inspection. The performance of issuing Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) against the target timeline continues to improve, helped by the outsourcing of assessments to educational psychologists.

The broad picture is of a service under pressure but coping, with recognition that there are significant challenges to face in the near future.

The Leader and Chief Executive both congratulated the children's service on the recent Outstanding Ofsted judgement in all areas.

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson reported that good progress continues to be made with schools in North Yorkshire judged to be Good or Outstanding in recent Ofsted inspections. The work of the young people, their families, teaching staff and schools across North Yorkshire was commended and best wishes to the young people moving into apprenticeships, training and employment.

On school admissions, 95.6% primary school pupils and 89.84% secondary school pupils received their first offer. The resetting of behaviour in schools after the Covid-19 pandemic has continued, with schools admission teams and advisors working closely with schools, governors, parents and carers and pupils. The barriers to accessing education are wide

and complex, and often specific to individual pupils and their families.

In response to Scrutiny Board members questions, it was confirmed that:

- A further Ofsted inspection is expected shortly, to take place jointly with CYPS, Disabled Children's Services, Inclusion and the NHS. On the increased demand for services, the new SEND strategy and the five point plan within that, together with an operational document seeks to address these concerns.
- There is a national shortage of Educational Psychologists to complete EHCPs that is hindering progress. In North Yorkshire, agency cover was put in place to complete the plans, but this is now proving more difficult as other areas adopt the same approach.
- Multi-agency screening does vary over time, but there has been an increase in police referrals following process improvements they have made around safeguarding. There is increased demand in areas of deprivation and amongst struggling families, with capacity increased in the centre of the county.

### **Environment**

Councillor Greg White reported on the progress made to reduce climate emissions as a Council and contribute to the efforts across North Yorkshire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A major survey to develop the Climate Change Strategy has been undertaken, with officers now working on directorate action plans to ensure the new strategy is implemented right across the council rather than a discrete piece of work.

In response to Scrutiny Board members questions, it was confirmed that:

- A new standardised approach on the data collection for all missed bin collections in North Yorkshire is in progress.
- Fly tipping levels have decreased in the last reported quarter, but this is a fluctuating statistic and can be down to many different factors.
- Ways of presenting the data on the percentage of waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting to be presented in future reports as a comparison against other local authorities.

### **Highways and Transportation**

Councillor Keane Duncan reported that the public engagement on the future Local Transport Plan has received three times the anticipated number of responses and the data is now being analysed ready for a second round of consultation in due course.

On electric vehicle (EV) charging points, £3m has been received from the Government so far, with an indicative allocation of £4.9m that has to be spent by 2025, which will meet the ambitions outlined in the EV charging strategy five years in advance of the 2030 deadline.

In response to Scrutiny Board members questions, it was confirmed that:

- On the drop in the percentage of successful insurance repudiations, the fluctuation in this metric was noted, but current performance is ahead of the 80% target. The amount paid out during 2022-23 (£385k) is the lowest annual amount since 2018-19.
- Officers will look at whether the data of CO2 emissions (Performance Indicators EN1, EN 17 and EN18) could be broken down by directorate or assistant directorate level to provide a comparison to set targets against in March 2024.
- The risk from climate events is quantified in the financial accounts as part of the Annual Governance Statement and the identification of Key Risks/Issues and the Impact of those as part of that. He also noted the General Working Balance of circa £30m, which is far higher than 5 to 10 years ago, to plan for events such as responding to unexpected climate events, with broader issues sitting within national planning.

- The Brierley Group companies do have their own environmental policies to follow and monitor their performance against it, with YorWaste given as an example. Although more work needed to be done in this area, the companies do have environmental policies in place.

### **Community Development**

Councillor Derek Bastiman noted the recruitment campaign in planning to hire more staff and reduce the reliance on agency and temporary staff. The Economic Growth Strategy will be considered further at the Transition (LGR) O&S Committee on Monday.

Councillor Simon Myers highlighted the transformation required to bring together the Culture, Arts and Housing services from the former district and borough councils, with a lot of partnership work required.

On culture, the Armed Forces Day in Scarborough had been a great success this year, with events in market towns during the summer for young people also proving popular, for example in Skipton with free events taking place every day during the holidays. A cultural strategy for York and North Yorkshire is being developed, kicking off in November with a symposium to start work with the many diverse partners across the region.

The Sports and Leisure Member Working Group continues to meet, looking to reposition the emphasis of leisure facilities provided by councils towards wellbeing and public health. Harrogate Hydro reopens next week. North Yorkshire library service has been awarded Library of Sanctuary status for the work it has done with refugees, with Scarborough Library now reopen following major investment, with the new IT area and young people's area proving popular. The recent 'Archives at Dusk' event was praised.

On Housing, Councillor Simon Myers updated the meeting that work is ongoing to bring together the work of the former district and borough councils, the three Housing Revenue Accounts and assessing the housing stock the new council now owns across the county and looking at the various issues such as private renting, shortages in affordable housing and social housing. A Housing Allocations policy is now out for public consultation, and an overall Housing Strategy is in draft form and will go out to public consultation in the near future.

Councillor Karin Sedgwick asked about the increase in empty homes and how they will be brought back into use. In response, Councillor Myers noted that the number of empty properties in North Yorkshire are generally in line with national data, representing 1.1% of the total housing stock. There has been an increase in empty properties nationally since the end of the pandemic, with the Council needing to do more work to understand this area better given the waiting lists for properties.

Following the noting of the Performance part of the report, Councillor Gareth Dadd addressed the meeting virtually on the Budget report.

In introducing this section, Councillor Dadd noted the £5.2m projected underspend against budget, noting with caution that energy cost savings make up a large chunk of the current underspend, as a result of international price changes and a positive procurement outcome on contract switching, along with the extra bargaining power of being a larger organisation. He noted that even with the underspend, the structural in-year deficit is projected to be £25.2million. Savings will be needed and there are opportunities requiring capital investment from reserves, but there will need to be less dependence on these in the future. By September, a full picture of the general fund will be available for quarter two.

Gary Fielding reiterated the £5.2million projected underspend, but reiterated the £25million

in-year deficit budget when planning for the budget next year to bridge the gap between pre-unitary and post-LGR. He also noted in Health and Adult Services the significant increase in the cost of meeting the demand for care, with a dependence on government grants to support this. In Children's services there is both increased demand for services and higher costs, with a difficult market at the moment. There is also cost pressures in Housing, Planning and Leisure Services and this is unlikely to change in the future, meaning savings will be required to help towards reducing the in-year deficit budget as much as possible.

On the Treasury Management section, officers are in the process of reviewing the commercial property investments that North Yorkshire Council has inherited from the former district and borough councils, but there is currently no cause for concern.

On the Capital Plan, it was noted that is a significant sum that both members and officers will need to be updated regularly on. A number of additional layers of governance are being created at officer level to reflect this. North Yorkshire Council is currently planning to invest £353.9m on capital schemes across the County in 2023/24 with major projects including Kex Gill, the Transforming Cities Fund and School Condition Funding, although it is unlikely that all of this be spent as intended in this financial year.

### **Resolved –**

That the Executive:

- a. notes the information in the Q1 Performance Report
- b. notes the forecast outturn position against the 2023/24 Revenue Budget, as summarised in **paragraph 2.2.2**.
- c. notes the forecast outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account as set out in **paragraph 2.3.1**.
- d. approves a preliminary allocation of £400k from the LGR Reserve to progress work on the North Yorkshire Local Plan in the first year (2023/24) and that the funding is delegated to the Corporate Director Community Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Open to Business as set out in **paragraphs 2.6.2 to 2.6.3**.
- e. authorises the Corporate Director, Resources in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader / Executive Member for Finance to implement a scheme for requests for funding from the LGR Reserve that total less than £1m with any proposals in excess of that requiring prior approval of the Executive as set out in **paragraph 2.6.4**.
- f. approves the acceptance of the grants as set out in **Appendix I** as described in paragraphs **2.7.1 to 2.7.2**
- g. notes the position on the Council's Treasury Management activities during the first quarter of 2023/24
- h. refers this report to the Audit Committee for their consideration as part of the overall monitoring arrangements for Treasury Management.
- i. approve the refreshed Capital Plan summarised at **paragraph 4.2.3**;
- j. approve the provision of £1.0m of corporate capital pot funding to meet the cost of completing the fleet replacement programme commenced last financial year (**paragraph 4.2.21**); and
- k. agree that no action be taken at this stage to allocate any additional capital resources (**paragraph 4.5.10**).

**307 Forward Plan**

Considered –

The Forward Plan for the period 21 August 2023 to 31 August 2024 was presented.

The report to the Executive on the Harrogate Transforming Cities Fund on Tuesday 19 September 2023 is to be added.

**Resolved -** That the Forward Plan be noted.

**308 Any Other Items**

There was one item of urgent business, with the Leader appointing Councillors David Chance and Derek Bastiman as delegates from North Yorkshire Council on the Dead Crustacean Collaborative Working Group set up by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.

The meeting concluded at 12:35.

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