

# NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

15 NOVEMBER 2023

## STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE TRANSITION (LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION) OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Transition (LGR) Overview and Scrutiny committee was constituted back in July 2022 to work alongside the existing five overview and scrutiny committees undertaking their 'business as usual' work, with a particular focus on helping to shape the development of the new unitary authority. The committee will run until 31 March 2026, with a review after two years.

Outlined below are further details of the topics that the committee considered at our last meeting on 4 September:

### **LGR Transition and Transformation Update**

Robert Ling, Director of Transformation, presented a verbal update to the committee on the work underway to transform service areas as the new Council passed the 150 days mark. He noted the convergence of services from the former district and borough councils into a single unitary council and a new operating model was continuing, with the desire to transform together alongside putting in place aligned structures, budgets, systems and processes. He explained service plans have been submitted and are in the process of being reviewed to agree areas of transformation. The resources required from particular services, in particular technology, finance and procurement was highlighted.

### **Community Development Update**

Nic Harne, Corporate Director of Community Development, also attended to provide an overview of the Community Development Directorate. Services that fall within this newly created directorate include: Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Tourism & Skills, Housing, Culture, Leisure, Archives and Libraries. The Heads of Service have been appointed and work is ongoing to complete the stage 2 structures in each service area.

Emerging themes include;

- Health and wellbeing – jobs, homes and active lives
- Place and regeneration
- Net zero and climate resilience
- Culture – one council, customer focus, data and performance driven

Moving forward the Directorate will;

- focus on moving quickly to complete stage 2 structures
- cultural impact of embedding new structures and ways of working
- adoption of new strategies and policies
- driving place-based approaches through the range of services delivered

### **Planning Service Update**

Trevor Watson, Assistant Director – Planning and Martin Grainger, Head of Development Management attended to update the committee on the operation of the planning service to date. It was noted that Heads of Service are now in place, progress is being made on the Local Plan and applications received are being dealt with safely and legally. It was emphasised that officers continue to look at how the current planning system is working, keeping it under review and keen to understand specific examples to come up with recommended changes after a suitable period of review.

Following a presentation, questions raised by committee members included:

- Making sure that the planning enforcement service of the new Council is robust under any new structure put in place, to ensure planning conditions are adhered to.
- Consideration be given to as part of the service review to changing the thresholds currently in place for applications to be determined by Committee.

- Whether the councillor call-in process could be extended to allow more time to gather opinions from parish and town councils and other interested parties?
- Could questioning of developers and public speakers be allowed as per some of the legacy councils?
- A consistent approach to the pre-application process is needed across the county.

The committee fed back their views and welcomed the approach taken by officers to keep listening and continue to monitor service performance, before reviewing after the first 12 months once enough data is available.

### **North Yorkshire Economic Growth Strategy**

Dave Caulfield - Assistant Director of Economic Development, Regeneration, Tourism and Skills sought views on the final draft North Yorkshire Economic Growth Strategy.

The importance of listening to key stakeholders and engaging with the public in developing the new Economic Growth strategy was emphasised. Officers are conscious that the ambitions set out in the strategy cannot be delivered by the Council on its own, it will require lots of partnership working to achieve its objectives.

The presentation outlined the work undertaken to date to inform the Plan, including changes made since the first draft and the results of the consultation with stakeholders. The development of a project pipeline to submit when external funding streams become available was highlighted to the committee.

It was noted that significant work will take place following final approval of the strategy at our meeting today on local-level action plans, taking account of the views of the Area Constituency Committees and Community Networks. This approach was welcomed by committee members.

Also, the important role of smaller market towns as part of the overall strategy was highlighted by members and the need to make progress on transport infrastructure and delivery to support the delivery of the Economic Growth strategy was highlighted.

### **North Yorkshire Destination Management Strategy**

Janet Deacon presented the first draft of the Destination Management Plan, which outlined the vision and aspiration for the visitor economy in North Yorkshire. The presentation outlined the work undertaken to date to inform the Plan, including the results of the extensive consultation with stakeholders on the first draft. The plan is to continue with consultation throughout September, before establishing workstreams, a Management Plan Board and Strategic Priority workstreams from January 2024.

### **Visit to Whitby and Scarborough Harbours**

Following interest from committee members in learning more about the operation of the port and harbours now they fall under the responsibility of the new unitary council, a visit was arranged to Whitby and Scarborough harbours in late September. The group started the day by visiting the harbourside in Whitby and the proposed site of the Whitby Maritime Training Hub, before touring the Whitby Lobster Hatchery. In Scarborough there was the opportunity to walk around the West Pier and hear more about the plans for redevelopment. The visit was well received by those in attendance and will help inform our next meeting in December, when a report will be considered on this subject.

### **Work Programme**

The next formal meeting of the committee will be taking place on Monday 4 December 2023 from 2pm at County Hall.

COUNCILLOR MALCOLM TAYLOR

30 October 2023