

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

24 JULY 2024

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY OF HEALTH COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR ANDREW LEE

The Scrutiny of Health Committee has a responsibility to review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services within the County, including Ambulance Trusts and the policies of the Health and Care Partnerships. A key part of that responsibility is requiring NHS bodies to consult health scrutiny on proposals for substantial developments or variations to local health service provision. The Committee contributes to annual health checks by providing feedback to the Integrated Care Boards and the NHS Trusts serving North Yorkshire on their performance and the experiences that the Committee has had with them.

Committee Meeting on 14 June 2024

The Committee last met on 14 June 2024, in person in The Grand meeting room at County Hall. At that meeting, Members considered items on:

- Yorkshire Ambulance Service (update on service delivery and developments)
- The Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2022/23
- Better Care Fund 2023/25
- Consultation on Community Water Fluoridation Expansion in North East England

Outlined below are further details in relation to some of the areas that the committee has been looking at.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service

The Committee received an annual update from the ambulance service (YAS) on service delivery, challenges and recent developments. Key areas incorporated into the update included the following:

- An outline of operational demand for YAS, which continues to be high
- Initiatives underway to support the achievement of the 'category 2' patient target, including increasing Hear and Treat rates.
- A summary around NHS 111 demand patterns.
- An update on the YAS Estates Strategy including the position on the Scarborough ambulance station.

Members' key concerns revolved around patient transfer times and availability of ambulances in more rural areas. The committee has requested further data on transfer times to the north of the county, for example to Darlington and Middlesbrough, as this was not included within the report. A request has also been put to YAS to provide further detail around the rising costs of the Scarborough ambulance station project, which has been placed on hold.

Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2022/23

The Director of Public Health presented the 2022-23 Annual Report "In Our Words: A Child's Life in North Yorkshire", which focussed on the 151,000 children and young people under 25 living in North Yorkshire, which had been prepared in conjunction with the Youth Council. The report highlighted the rapid impact of digitisation, and mental health and wellbeing and made a number of recommendations, as well as providing an update on the 2021-22 Annual Report, "Learning From COVID-19".

The committee thanked the Director of Public Health for sharing the report. Members discussed the links between poor oral health and financial deprivation, and asked about the steps being undertaken to prevent poor oral health in children under five. The committee heard about the partnership work being undertaken through the NHS, Public Health and the council's children's services to help tackle some of the factors determining poor health in children.

Members thanked officers for their report, and highlighted that they were willing to offer assistance in acting as a link to their communities, highlighting initiatives to residents and providing feedback and local context.

Better Care Fund 2023/25.

The Director of Public Health presented a report updating members on the Better Care Fund (BCF) for 2023-25, which included:

- the Better Care Fund Submission for 2023-2025;
- The Quarterly returns for the second, third and fourth quarters of 2023/2024; and
- The Better Care Fund Addendum Submission for 2024/25.

Members considered the use of the BCF to strategically focus on prevention and stimulate joint working and sought reassurance that funding isn't being used reactively where services are experiencing financial strain. The committee heard about the careful prioritisation of funding allocations and that care partnerships are still developing. A discussion also took place regarding recruitment and retention of adult care staff through the Make Care Matter campaign.

The committee will receive the Annual Report for 2023/24 towards the end of this calendar year.

Consultation on Community Water Fluoridation Expansion in North East England

Members considered a report inviting comment on a government consultation regarding the expansion of community water fluoridation schemes across North East England, which would affect some northern areas of North Yorkshire. Comments were invited to be fed back to the Executive Member, responding on the Council's behalf as NYC is a statutory consultee. The committee heard from the Director of Public Health that fluoridation is promoted as part of preventing tooth decay, particularly in children. The committee also heard from an NHS dental health specialist who spoke to some of the scientific context to the promotion of this expansion.

The committee concluded overall that it was supportive of fluoridation when viewed as part of a broader package of public health interventions and factors (such as encouraging supervised teeth brushing in children) that are needed to prevent and reduce tooth decay. The committee did acknowledge that there are contrary views to community water fluoridation but having considered the scientific basis around potential health impacts such as fluorosis, Members felt that on balance the outcomes are very favourable, particularly in looking to help prevent tooth decay in children. Clearly if any further evidence is developed to indicate that this matter would need to be revisited by the committee then they would welcome the Director of Public Health keeping them apprised.

Committee Work Programme

Having previously discussed at length the challenges facing healthcare across the County generally and in particular the areas the Committee felt would be a priority in terms of Scrutiny over the next 18-24 months, the workplan has been updated to reflect this.

The Committee is keen to work collaboratively and will therefore continue to link in with the Council's Area Constituency Committees (ACC's) to ensure focus is maintained at a local level and also the Scrutiny Board to facilitate a County wide perspective. The Committee will also continue to work closely with the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee allowing continued joint working around social care.

The next meeting of the committee will be at 10am on 13th September 2024.