

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

13 NOVEMBER 2024

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF SCRUTINY BOARD

Scrutiny Board brings together the Chairs of the six thematic overview and scrutiny committees at the Council and the Older Peoples', Young People's and Climate Change Champions. It provides an opportunity for a whole council view of scrutiny activity, which avoids gaps and overlaps and helps establish a lead committee for areas of joint interest. It also provides a forum in which the key performance issues for the Council can be reviewed and items for further scrutiny identified.

The scrutiny function was created to act as a check on and balance to the executive and it is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements. There has been one meeting of Scrutiny Board since my last statement to Council.

The meeting of Scrutiny Board on 16 August 2024 focussed upon the scrutiny of the Executive Q1 Performance and Finance Management Report, ahead of the members of the Board attending the meeting of the Executive on Tuesday 20 August 2024. Some of the issues raised at the Executive meeting by members of the Scrutiny Board are highlighted below:

- The increase in the numbers of children who are home educated, what is driving this, what mechanisms are in place to ensure that the education provided is of a minimum standard and what is being done to help encourage children who are home educated back into mainstream school provision
- The reasons why attainment is below the national average at KS2, when in Early Years performance it is above the national average. Specifically, why does attainment seem to fall away as pupils get older and move through the primary school system.
- The long-term impact of the pandemic and the associated school closures upon the social development of school children and whether there is a link between this and the numbers of suspensions and exclusions locally, regionally and nationally.
- Whether more could be done to reduce the number of people admitted to hospital who could have been treated elsewhere in the health and social care system.

Updates were also provided by the Climate Change Champion, the Older People's Champion and the Young People's Champion on key elements of their work over the past 3 months. The themes covered by the updates included:

- The work being done to establish an Environmental Farmers Group in part of the county
- The proppant squeeze process for the extraction of hydrocarbons and the concerns previously raised regarding this process
- Ongoing concerns regarding the Digital Switchover of telephone lines, with some people in the more rural areas of the county worried that they will not be able to use the landline phone when there is a power cut
- The impact of the progressive move towards a cashless society upon some older people
- The work that the Youth Justice Service does to promote skills and training for the young people that they work with
- The impact that regular vaping can have upon the health and wellbeing of children and young people and also educational attainment.

Members of Scrutiny Board also reviewed a number of matters that directly related to the Council's scrutiny function, including:

- A review of the work programmes of the Area Committees, to help to ensure that opportunities for joint working and co-ordination of activity are realised. This will then reduce duplication of effort and help manage the referrals process so that referrals made between the committees are appropriate and targeted.
- The development of the Corporate Calendar for 2025-26 and the pattern of the overview and scrutiny committee meetings.
- A discussion about how the overview and scrutiny committees could make more use of performance data in the development of their work programmes and key lines of enquiry.

Members of Scrutiny Board are next due meet at 10am on Friday 15 November 2024. At that meeting, the Executive Q2 Performance and Finance Management Report will be scrutinised.

COUNCILLOR KARIN SEDGWICK
5 November 2024