

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**13 NOVEMBER 2024**

### **STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE CORPORATE AND PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Since the Chair's last statement to Council on 24 July 2024, the Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met once on 9 September 2024, when the Committee considered the following items of business:

- Community Safety Bi-annual Update
- Transformation Update
- Customer Services Update
- Youth Justice – Annual Performance Update
- Localities Bi-annual Update
- Feedback on 'Right to Grow' Notice of Motion

As part of the community safety update, the Committee whilst pleased to note that the threat posed by right-wing groups was currently minimal with very little disorder in the county, queried the threat presented by groups not identified within the report such as those with far left, economic or environmental extreme ideologies. They went on to discuss the strategies used to engage an individual's consent to the de-radicalisation process, recognising a high degree of Prevent referrals included reference to online behaviour, and were reassured that work was underway to educate young people and to tactically (nationally) ensure intelligence and focus on the dark web.

The Transformation update provided the Committee with an overview of the Council's new Transformation Strategy and Target Operating Model (TOM), which defines how the council should operate in delivering against its vision and plan. They also received an update on service convergence and noted there were no blockages or issues on the 'people' side and any red-rated areas were around issues such as finance systems.

The Committee was pleased to note that the 'contact us' form was to be reviewed in recognition that it was currently too lengthy with too many drop-off points. Members also highlighted positive experiences of customer services but raised specific concerns in relation to transformation and convergence, including:

- A number of planning-related emails not being followed up on.
- Street cleaning in Whitby affected by staff reductions.
- Contact being made with officers who are no longer in post.
- Lack of confidence around enforcement in Selby following a significant reduction in officers.
- Weeding of local areas not undertaken.

In response to the update on customer services, the Committee questioned whether extending operational hours would assist with handling the larger volumes of telephone calls being received. Whilst it was recognised there would be a cost implication, Members also recognised that an increased use of AI would likely assist with efficiency and savings. Other points raised included:

- Commendation for providing a customer point from the C4DI site in central Northallerton.
- A query around when the legacy council phone numbers would cease to be usable.
- The top five service demands listed in the report did not reflect the types of issue and concerns most frequently raised with councillors.
- Whether targets were set around calls handled.

- Surprise at the high ratio of customer calls to email traffic.

Regarding the Youth Justice annual performance update, the Committee reflected on the unusually high representation of girls in both the First Time Entrants and offending cohorts and queried the causal factors. Members felt it important that the service got a full understanding of what was driving the issue in order to be able to tackle it effectively and were pleased to note that work was underway with York University to look at this further.

In response to the Localities bi-annual update the Committee asked if the policy for the locality budget could be reviewed, given that the £300 minimum was not always helpful where community groups would benefit from a lower value award. The Committee also requested that Members be provided with information on grants awarded in their area (by other councillors) up to £1000.

Finally, regarding the notice of motion to increase residents right to grow, the Committee agreed that consideration for the provision of allotment land as part of new housing developments should be a policy provision within the new Local Plan. It was therefore agreed that an additional recommendation to that effect should be added to the officers' recommendations going to Full Council. It also recommended that officers be given additional time to develop a responsive approach to community grow within the context of current capacity and cross-cutting strategic priorities.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW WILLIAMS