

North Yorkshire County Council

Executive

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Tuesday, 9th March, 2021 commencing at 11.00 am.

County Councillor Carl Les in the Chair. plus County Councillors Gareth Dadd, David Chance, Caroline Dickinson, Michael Harrison, Andrew Lee, Don Mackenzie, Janet Sanderson and Greg White.

In attendance: County Councillors Paul Haslam, Derek Bastiman, John Ennis, Janet Jefferson, Karin Sedgwick, Andy Paraskos and Annabel Wilkinson and Paul Haslam.

Officers present: Richard Flinton, Barry Khan, Gary Fielding, Richard Webb, Stuart Carlton, Vicki Dixon, Howard Emmett, Steve Evans, Daniel Harry and Melanie Carr

Apologies: County Councillor Patrick Mulligan, and Officers Karl Battersby and Justine Brooksbank.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

560 Introductions

Members of the Executive, Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny Board introduced themselves, and County Councillor Carl Les welcomed other Councillors and officers present at the meeting.

561 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 February 2021

Resolved –

That the public Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed by the Chairman as a correct record.

562 Declarations of Interest

In regard to Agenda item 5, County Councillor Carl Les declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Board Member of Welcome to Yorkshire. He and County Councillor Janet Sanderson also both declared a non-pecuniary interest, as Chair and Member of the Trustee Board of North Yorkshire Youth respectively.

In addition, it was noted that as an employee of one of the organisations listed in Appendix 5D, Cllr Michael Harrison had a dispensation from the Standards Committee to vote on matters related to Treasury Management.

563 Public Questions and Statements

There were no public questions or statements.

564 Q3 Performance Monitoring and Budget report including: Revenue Plan; Capital Plan; Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators

Considered – A joint report of the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director for Strategic Resources, bringing together key aspects of the County Council's performance on a quarterly basis.

County Councillor David Chance introduced the Quarter 3 performance report, confirming the Council continued to demonstrate good performance across all four of its ambitions. He provided a brief summary of the strengths and challenges in performance across the four ambitions. In particular, he highlighted:

- GCSE Results
- Low repeat referrals for children's social care
- The final report arising from the Rural Commission, to be published in Spring
- The ongoing work of Stronger Communities, working with 23 community organisations around the county, helping an average of 2600 people a week
- The County Council's approved plans to become a gateway organisation under the Governments Kickstart scheme, offering 33 placements for young people within the Council, and 205 within 46 partner organisations
- The number of staff working from home - 3,237 on average weekdays
- The reduction in mileage costs throughout the Covid period
- An increase in public satisfaction in Highways and transportation
- The ongoing challenge of supporting the recovery of local businesses
- The impact of Covid on voluntary organisations with concern mounting about their future - over a third had needed to use their financial reserves in order to survive
- 56% of permanent placements for older people were currently above the authority's approved rates (87% in Harrogate)
- EHC Plans had increased to 3450 (a 13% increase from Qtr3 2020), with 145 new EHC Plans issued in the Quarter
- An increase in referrals from the Police (1780 in Qtr3 – up by 15%)

County Councillor Carl Les acknowledged the strong performance the County Council continued to deliver, and County Councillor Janet Sanderson introduced the in-depth focus of the performance report on 'Every child & young person has the best possible start in life'. She drew particular attention to:

- The lack of Ofsted inspections and formal exams due to school closures, as part of the Covid-19 lockdown measures
- The challenge of keeping schools open to ensure all vulnerable children and those with complex needs continued to attend school
- Good attendance levels (85-90% of those children had attended each day)
- A rise in elected home education, with the offer of support provided by Early Help
- Full term and permanent exclusions reduced for a second Qtr running
- The increase in Police referrals, thought to be due to an increased awareness campaign run by the Police around safeguarding issues
- The timeliness of assessments
- Child Protection Plans remained stable with no spikes in demand but there was some

concern around the level of second and subsequent Plans

- The anticipated rise in Looked After Children had not materialised
- A reduction in the number of dental checks was cause for concern – work would continue to lobby for good health and dental assessments
- 96.2% of Care Leavers were living in suitable accommodation – NYCC being the best performing Authority nationally
- Early Help had adjusted flexibly in response to the pandemic, using a blend of real and virtual meetings

County Councillor Janet Sanderson thanked CYPs officers for their excellent work, and acknowledged their resilience and creative and flexible approach to service delivery throughout the pandemic.

On behalf of the Scrutiny Board, County Councillor Derek Bastiman endorsed those thanks and went on to query the reason for the increase in Police referrals and what more could be done to reduce the backlog in criminal court cases.

Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director for Children and Young People Service confirmed the Police had applied some additional vigilance since the closure of schools, which had resulted in the rise in referrals. He noted schools would usually have noticed concerns earlier. He too expressed concern about the way young people in the custody of HMIP were being looked after during the pandemic, and confirmed the Youth Justice Board was very aware of all the issues and would continue to keep a focus on those concerns.

Other Members of the Board also raised a number of queries related to the performance report.

County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson raised the lack of availability of NHS dentistry, particularly for LAC and care leavers. It was noted that the Looked After Children Members Group remained focussed on ensuring those children continued to receive health and dental care check-ups, and County Councillor Janet Sanderson agreed the Council should lobby NHS England and the local Integrated Care System.

County Councillor John Ennis confirmed the Scrutiny of Health Committee was planning to carry out a review of NHS Dental Services across the county, particularly for vulnerable groups, and suggested the findings from that review could help inform any future lobbying for improved access to dentistry as part of the emerging integrated care system.

County Councillor Janet Jefferson raised concern about the rise in the number of families who had chosen to home school, and sought reassurance that those families would be encouraged back in to traditional schooling once the pandemic was over. She also expressed concern about delays in the OFSTED programme of inspections caused by Covid. Noting the number of years that had passed since some schools had been inspected, she recognised how unfair it was for those schools who had worked hard to improve their standards but were still being judged on their previous low Ofsted rating. Finally, she complimented the work of Traded services in schools in preparation for the return to school and added her thanks to the Directorate for its work throughout the pandemic and for keeping members informed.

Stuart Carlton confirmed the Ofsted inspection framework had changed in recent years and that inspections were expected to start again in the near future. He also noted the current lack of comparator data available to support those inspections, and confirmed that primary school attendance rates on day one of the return to school showed attendance around 97%.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd was pleased to note the high level of attendance on day

one. He was also pleased to note the enthusiasm from teachers and staff for the re-opening of schools, and the work they have undertaken to enable that to happen. Stuart Carlton drew attention to the support and guidance that had been given to all schools in the lead up to them re-opening.

County Councillor David Chance clarified that funding for the 23 Support Organisations had been extended to September 2021 to enable them to continue to support vulnerable residents/families. County Councillor Paul Haslem raised the importance of the provision of nutritious meals to children to ensure their best start in life.

Elsewhere in the report, County Councillor Don Mackenzie corrected an error that referred to the latest phase of the Superfast North Yorkshire Programme as Phase 3. He confirmed that Phase 3 was actually near to completion and it was Phase 4 that was now underway. He also paid tribute to:

- NYNet, for continuing an excellent job on delivering the project and maintaining the infrastructure throughout the pandemic,
- The Highways and Bridges Team for the rising public satisfaction levels
- The Public Rights of Way team for their work in maintaining the PROW throughout the pandemic, and in particular for the work of the volunteers.

Overall, the Executive endorsed the strong performance of the County Council, and noted the improvements required where necessary.

Revenue, Treasury Management & Capital Plan

County Councillor Gareth Dadd introduced those sections of the report. Concerning the revenue budget, he highlighted only marginal movement from Quarter 2 and drew attention to the projected net underspend of less than 1%, slightly down from the last quarter outturn.

In regard to Treasury Management, attention was drawn to the proposal to extend the time given to Welcome to Yorkshire to repay their loan, and it was noted that the County Council had benefitted financially from the interest paid on the loan, and that given the value of the property the loan was absolutely secure.

Members noted the Capital Plan section of the report, and noted the slight uplift in the Council's share of the Kex Gill Project, as detailed in the report. Gary Fielding, Corporate Director for Strategic Resources confirmed the additional £550K cost to the Council suppressed the underspend referred to in the Revenue section of the report.

Executive Members voted in favour of all of the recommendations in the report, and it was

Resolved – That:

- a) The latest position for the County Council's 2020/21 Revenue Budget, as summarised in paragraph 2.1.2 be noted;
- b) The position on the GWB (paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.3) be noted;
- c) The position on the 'Strategic Capacity – Unallocated' reserve (paragraphs 2.4.4 to 2.4.6) be noted;
- d) The position on the County Council's Treasury Management activities during the third quarter of 2020/21 be noted
- e) Refer this report to the Audit Committee for their consideration as part of the overall monitoring arrangements for Treasury Management.
- f) The secured loan facility of up to £500k to Welcome to Yorkshire, be extended to 1st April 2022;

- g) Authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Strategic Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Democratic Services) to complete the necessary arrangements with Welcome to Yorkshire on existing terms.
- h) The updated Q3 2020/21 Capital Plan be noted; and
- i) The additional funding requirement for the Kex Gill realignment scheme (paragraph 4.5) be noted;

565 Covid Winter Grant Scheme Update

Considered - Report of the Corporate Director for Children & Young People's Service seeking approval for the final deployment of the Covid Winter Grant allocation to support vulnerable households and families with children affected by the pandemic.

County Councillor Janet Sanderson introduced the report confirming that the Council received an ring-fenced funding from the Government to support vulnerable households with children over the holiday period. She confirmed that a local eligibility framework had been introduced to grant payments to schools and academies, early years providers and post-16 schools and colleges, enabling allocations based on free school meal or pupil premium data. She also noted that the initial round of payments were distributed in time for Christmas.

Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director for Children and Young People Services drew Members' attention to the proposal to provide supermarket vouchers at £15 per week to cover the two weeks at Easter holiday period, and confirmed that the Government had very recently announced some further funding would now be made available to cover that period up to 16 April 2021. With this in mind, he requested two additional recommendations be considered i.e.:

- (iii) Approve an allocation equivalent to a further £20 one-off funding for other household essentials but with schools being granted further flexibilities should they believe local circumstances warrant such flexibility
- (iv) To delegate to the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services, in consultation with the appropriate Executive Member, the ability to administer the scheme and exercise his discretion in granting additional flexibilities

County Councillor Gareth Dadd welcomed the proposal to allow schools the flexibility to respond to their local circumstances, recognising they were best placed to identify those most in need of further support.

All Executive Members voted in favour of the revised recommendations, and it was

Resolved - That:

- i) The deployment of funding to schools, academies, colleges and early years' providers to provide supermarket vouchers totalling £15 per week for 2 weeks prior to the start of the Easter break be approved.
- ii) The allocation of supermarket vouchers totalling £15 per week for 2 weeks for eligible care leavers prior to the start of the Easter break be approved.
- (iii) An allocation equivalent to a further £20 one-off funding for other household essentials be approved, but with schools being granted further flexibilities should they believe local circumstances warrant such flexibility
- (iv) The ability to administer the scheme and exercise discretion in granting additional

flexibilities be delegated to the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services, in consultation with the appropriate Executive Member.

566 St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School, Whitby - School Closure Proposal

A report of the Corporate Director - Children and Young People's Service providing information to support the Executive in determining a proposal to close St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School.

County Councillor Janet Sanderson introduced the report which recommended closure of the school with effect from 9 April 2021, and detailed the issues raised in the one objection received to the statutory notices.

The Executive and paid tribute to County Councillor Joe Plant for his efforts alongside the governing body to identify options that would allow the school to remain sustainable. They agreed that with only two children remaining on the school roll, the reasons for the proposal to close the school as laid out in the report, were correct and expressed sadness that closure was the only viable option at this stage.

With that in mind, the Executive voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations, and it was

Resolved – That:

- a) The issues listed in paragraph 9.2 of the report had been satisfied and there could therefore be a determination of the proposals.
- b) That the Local Authority cease to maintain St Hilda's Roman Catholic (Voluntary Aided) Primary School, Whitby with effect from 9 April 2021.

567 Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Children & Young People's Service outlining the funding allocation for North Yorkshire County Council and the conditions of grant relating to the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

County Councillor Janet Sanderson introduced the report, and provided an overview of the proposals for the approach to deploying the HAF Programme grant funding allocation, aimed at supporting eligible children in the period Easter 2021 through to Christmas 2021. It was noted the Programme would provide healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children who might otherwise not have them.

Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director for Children & Young People's Services confirmed it was a follow on scheme for school holidays and not a replacement for the free school meals scheme. It was not expected that all children who received free school meals would take part.

The Executive voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations, and it was

Resolved – That:

- (i) The approach to the local implementation of the Holiday Activities and Food programme in North Yorkshire for Easter 2021 be endorsed;
- (ii) Authority be delegated to the Corporate Director – Children & Young People's Service to develop the framework and approach for planning and organising activities for

Summer 2021 and Christmas 2021 consistent with the scheme aims and objective.

568 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) proposing an appointment to the North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Board

Resolved – That the appointment of Ashley Green, Chief Executive Officer, as the nominated deputy representative for Healthwatch North Yorkshire, be recommended to Council.

569 Forward Plan Extract - Executive Items only

Members considered an Executive extract from the Forward Plan for the period from 1 March 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 pm.