

# North Yorkshire Council

## Housing and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 2nd September 2024 commencing at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Committee Members present: Councillor Malcolm Taylor in the Chair; plus Councillors John Ritchie, Caroline Dickinson, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, Nigel Knaption, John Mann, Steve Mason, Bob Packham, Stuart Parsons, Yvonne Peacock, Kirsty Poskitt, Dan Sladden and Phil Trumper, Alyson Baker (sub) and George Jabbour (sub).

Officers present: Andrew Rowe, Jo Ireland, Carl Doolan, Hazel Smith and Melanie Carr

Apologies: Councillor Karl Arthur and Clive Pearson

---

**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

---

### 13 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Karl Arthur and Clive Pearson gave apologies and were substituted by Councillors George Jabbour and Alyson Baker respectively.

### 14 Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 June 2024

**Resolved** – That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 10 June 2024, having been printed and circulated, to taken as read and confirmed as a correct record.

### 15 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Yvonne Peacock and Bob Packham both declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 as both were community library managers.

Councillor Dan Sladden declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 9 as a private landlord.

### 16 Public Participation

There were no public questions or statements.

### 17 Libraries Annual Review 2023-24

Members received a presentation from Hazel Smith, General Manager of NYC Libraries, providing an overview of their work since the last annual update, previously given to the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members noted the breakdown of library provision provided in Hazel Smith's presentation and the following:

- The increases in books issued - both hard copies and digitally;

- The increases in face to face enquiries and the number of events held;
- The four themes within the Library strategy, and the work undertaken throughout 2023-24 to progress them;
- The refurbishment works undertaken at a number of community libraries;
- The support offered to refugees and asylum seekers;
- The contribution of volunteers;
- The library service contribution to the new council plan;
- The new IT system due to go live in April 2025

Hazel Smith went on to give an overview of the priorities for 2024-25, as detailed in her presentation.

Members welcomed the Arts Council funding to purchase a replacement Mobile Library, noting the current vehicle was reaching the end of its life. They were pleased to note the intention to visit more communities and offer more services following the launch of the new vehicle in 2025.

Members raised concern about the condition of some library buildings, and it was confirmed the intention was to be less reactive and more pro-active in the future, with the introduction of a planned maintenance programme. They also highlighted the need to ensure volunteers were trained on the new IT system.

Finally, the impact of the renovation of Scarborough library on usage was raised, and it was confirmed that there had been a light decrease in actual book issues but a significant rise in digital issues.

Members recorded their appreciation for the work of library staff and volunteers, and it was

**Resolved** - That the Library Services annual update be noted.

## **18 Cultural Strategy for North Yorkshire Council - Development Update**

Considered – A presentation updating on the development of a cultural strategy for North Yorkshire, provided by the Head of Culture and Archives.

Danielle Daglan, the Head of Culture and Archives provided background to the creation of the new Strategy following the formation of the new North Yorkshire Council and confirmed the key partners involved. Her update included an overview of the information gathered in support including the public consultation and examples of the feedback received.

It was noted that schools across the county would be consulted on the draft Strategy from September onwards. Members acknowledged the symbolic relationship between arts and health, and the benefits of cultural engagement on mental health and health outcomes.

Members were pleased to note that accessibility would be an inherent theme throughout the new Strategy to ensure engagement in cultural activities would be delivered in a range of ways to all. Officers confirmed that once in place, there would be an annual review of the strategy to enable the Council to react to the changing agenda. They also confirmed they were working with City of York Council on their cultural strategy.

Members agreed they would like to hold an additional informal online meeting to consider the finalised draft Cultural Strategy at the appropriate time ahead of its consideration by the Executive so that the committee's views could be taken into consideration.

The Chair thanked officers for their ongoing work to develop the Strategy and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The presentation be noted.
- ii. An additional informal meeting be arranged to consider the finalised draft Strategy prior to its consideration by the Executive.

## **19 Strategic Leisure Review - Progress Update**

Considered – A presentation on the ongoing strategic leisure review delivered by the Assistant Director for Leisure and Culture.

The presentation provided a progress update on the work underway on the review which included transitioning and transforming services in to a single new in house model and identifying any property related issues.

Jo Ireland, Assistant Director for Leisure and Culture provided examples of the new branding reflecting the range of those who are using the services and confirmed there would be a phased approach to the role of new signage and uniforms.

The presentation provided a timetable for the transfer of venues to the new branding and detailed the ongoing work to engage with staff and move to one IT system. It was recognised there would be some minimal disruption during the IT transition.

The presentation also highlighted the key priorities within the move to a single service which included introducing a consistent approach to pricing and concessions, and contracts and suppliers, and phase II staffing restructures once Richmondshire came back in house in March 2025.

Members considered the risks and issues outlined in the presentation. They also noted the planned two phase approach to the development of a leisure investment strategy, and the public engagement to be undertaken in support of that work. Members were pleased to note it would include engagement with non-users.

Jo Ireland went on to outline:

- planned service developments;
- outreach proposals;
- opportunities to expand the offer;
- an improved active ageing offer;
- work with national parks to develop their health and wellbeing offer;

Overall members were pleased to note the intention to involve those currently providing/ participating in activities outside of council owned facilities, recognising that those venues were all part of the ongoing property services rationalisation review. They also noted the intention to look at supply and demand in order to develop a playing pitch strategy for the shole of North Yorkshire, and to carry out a gap analysis with the aim of addressing the lack of sites/facilities in some parts of the county.

Specifically in regard to the 16 swimming pools across the county, members agreed it would be beneficial to address staffing issues/training in order to build in some resilience and enable staff to provide cover where needed. Jo Ireland confirmed that almost all pools were delivered by the authority, that energy costs were a major issue and that de-carbonisation plans were in place for all pools. Members noted that removing carbon would not necessarily reduce running costs.

The issue of introducing a county wide membership scheme enabling users to use any facility was discussed and it was confirmed it would require some modelling work to

understand what if any benefits/disadvantages such a scheme would bring. Funding and subsidisation was also raised as an ongoing issue.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

## **20 Housing Policy Framework**

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development presenting the policy framework for Landlord Services and Housing Standards and a proposed timetable for the development of the necessary policies, procedures and standards required in order to deliver a harmonised service to tenants.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing introduced the report and drew members attention to Appendix C where the required policies, procedures and standards were listed. He noted that in most cases it was about consolidating the existing documents of the legacy stockholding authorities. He suggested that members may wish to focus more on the key standards and policies in the list and asked members to identify those they would like to contribute to the development of.

Having considered the list, the Committee agreed that where possible they would like to be involved both at the policy formation stage and at post public consultation/pre-decision stage. They recognised this would not be possible in all cases given the tight timeframe for developing some of the key standards and policies and that in those instance it would be better to be involved at post public consultation/pre-decision stage.

They recognised that in order to sign up to participate in a particular Task Group, Members would need an understanding of the commitment it would require i.e. the optimum number of task group meetings each review would require and the possible meeting dates when they would need to be available. Given the scale of the task ahead, officers were asked to identify five or so key standards and policies where member contribution via a task group review could add the most value, and to consider what the work of each Task Group might include. Outside of that, members agreed other draft policies should come to the committee prior to their consideration by the Executive Member for Culture, Arts & Housing so that the views of scrutiny members could inform the decision making process.

Officers agreed to draw up a list and potential timetable of Task Group meetings for circulation to committee members via the scrutiny officer.

Resolved – That:

- i. The report be noted.
- ii. Officers draw up a list of key standards and policies with a potential timetable of Task Group meetings for each, for circulation to committee members.

## **21 Draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (Landlord Services)**

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development presenting a draft landlord policy for anti-social behaviour (ASB) for members consideration.

Carl Doolan, Head of Housing Management and Landlord Services introduced the report confirming the draft policy provided at ppendix A of the report harmonised the three existing policies of the legacy stock-holding authorities and met the expectations within the relevant standard.

Attention was drawn to the draft Good Neighbourhood Management Policy and the draft

ASB procedure at Appendices B & C of the report, and Members suggested:

- More promotional work was required for the public to raise awareness of the ASB Policy and procedure, including where to complain to, and the need to create a diary of events to support a complaint of ASB;
- Improved written communications with the public were required, in particular written feedback on actions taken in response to a complaint;

Carl Doolan confirmed specialist ASB officers had been employed to support tenants in dealing with neighbour disputes and instances of ASB.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

## **22 Housing Improvement Board Update**

Considered – A presentation from the Assistant Director for Housing providing an update on the work of the Housing Improvement Board.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing, provided an overview of the role of the Board and drew attention to the scale of the improvement plan and the four ongoing work streams underway to deliver those improvements.

It was confirmed that in regard to Housing Improvements and Housing – Regulatory (agenda item 11) the Council had self-referred to the Regulator and was awaiting a judgement confirmation of the current position. It was noted that the Council was not expecting any enforcement at this stage and that relations were good with the Regulator.

Overall, Members agreed that completing the stock condition survey work was paramount and were therefore keen to see that work being progressed.

Having considered all the key issues and risks associated with the four work streams as detailed in the presentation, together with the planned next steps, it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The update be noted.
- ii. An update on the work of the Board be provided at each future meeting of the Committee.

## **23 Housing - Regulatory Update**

Members received a brief verbal update on the ongoing Housing – Regulatory work from Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing.

Members recognised the scale of the work required to comply with the new RSH standards. In particular, they were pleased to note the work to revise and put in place a new Allocation Policy for the Council had already been completed, and welcomed the opportunity to contribute in the future.

Resolved – That:

- i. The verbal update be noted.
- ii. Further updates be provided at future meetings.

**24 Work Programme 2024/25**

Members considered their work programme and agreed that would like to invite the Executive Member for Culture, Arts and Housing to their next meeting in November 2024 to discuss among other things, the timeframe for delivering the proposed 500 new social housing properties across the county.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted and updated to reflect the discussions at the meeting.

**25 Date of Next Meeting - 25 November 2024**

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.