

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

26 February 2025

The Report of the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the Notices of Motion on 'Youth Council Engagement' and 'Community Impact Assessment' referred to the committee at the full Council meeting on 13 November 2024

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Council with a summary of the deliberations and recommendations of the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee concerning two Notices of Motion referred to the committee at the meeting of full Council on 13 November 2024.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At Full Council on 13 November 2024, the Chairman referred a number of Notices of Motion to the Scrutiny Board for their allocation to the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee.
- 2.2 Subsequently the Scrutiny Board allocated two of those Notices of Motion to the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the intention of them being considered and recommendations brought back to this meeting of full Council. The first of those concerned Youth Council Engagement and the second around understanding the potential impact of decisions made by the Council on local communities.
- 2.3 The associated report that went to the meeting of the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 December 2024 can be accessed via the following link (Agenda Item 9):
[Agenda for Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 2 December 2024, 10.30 am | North Yorkshire Council](#)
- 2.4 The Council's Constitution (Council Procedure Rules, section 11, page 223) states:
- (h) If a motion is referred to the Executive or one committee only, the Executive or that committee shall report to the Council upon that motion together with its recommendation. If a motion is referred to more than one committee, the Executive shall report to the Council upon that motion together with its recommendations. The report of the Executive or any committee to which a motion has been referred shall contain a statement of that motion.
- (i) When the Executive or a committee reports back on a motion, the motion, as originally moved and seconded at the earlier meeting, will be the matter before the Council. Any recommendation of the Executive or committee to amend the motion will therefore be an amendment to the motion and any recommendation to support or oppose the motion will be only an expression of views.

3.0 Youth Council Engagement

- 3.1 The Notice of Motion as proposed by Councillor Andrew Timothy (and seconded by Councillor Barbara Brodigan) stated:

'Many British young people are very interested in how society should be run. In March this year, UK Youth reported, "88% of young people believe it is important to have a say in the decisions politicians make about public life"¹. Despite this, according to an IPPR report, turnout in the 2024 general election was lowest in the constituencies with the lowest average age².

It is clear that many young people feel that most politicians, regardless of political party or lack thereof, are not interested in supporting them with the issues they face. This adversely affects their engagement in elections and the democratic process as a whole.

Children and young people are our future. Engaging them in politics is crucial to ensure the survival of institutions of this country.'

- 3.2 The Motion asked Council to agree to more fully involve young people in the democratic decision-making process by:
- Inviting the Youth Assembly of North Yorkshire to prepare a single motion each year to be submitted and considered at the Full Council meeting held before the 1st of September of that year.
 - Amending the council constitution such that the motion may be proposed by the chair of the Youth Assembly.
 - Genuinely debating and considering the motion in the same way as if a North Yorkshire Councillor had proposed it.
- 3.3 The relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) associated with this Motion were identified as being:
- Goal 4: Quality Education - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
 - Goal 5: Gender Equality - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
 - Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities - Reduce inequality within and among countries.
 - Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
 - Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.
- 3.4 Scrutiny Board referred this matter to this Committee in recognition that it was a governance issue requiring a change to the council's Constitution. At the same time they agreed it would be inequitable to only allow the Youth Assembly of North Yorkshire to submit a Notice of Motion and therefore agreed that any such amendment to the Constitution would need to apply to all external bodies, which could potentially result in a flood of Motions in the future.
- 3.5 Legal Services confirmed there was no legal impediment to amending the Constitution to allow an external body to submit a Notice of Motion, or to have it be presented in person by that body's representative at a meeting of full Council. However, any proposed amendments to the Constitution would require consideration by the cross-party Member Working Group on the Constitution, who would make recommendations to the Executive, who in turn would make a recommendation to Council.
- 3.6 The Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted that full Council was not meant to be a public engagement meeting, but rather for determining the budget, as defined in Article 4.01(b), the Policy Framework, as defined in Article 4.01(a), and for the constitutional and related functions set out in Article 4.02. They also noted that public

¹ <https://www.ukyouth.org/2024/03/only-one-in-10-young-people-believe-politicians-prioritise-their-needs-as-childrens-election-launched/>

² <https://www.ippr.org/articles/half-of-us>

participation at a Council meeting was therefore limited in comparison to other committee meetings and had to relate to a specific agenda item. Council Procedure Rule 9 allows members of the public to ask questions or make statements at ordinary meetings of the Council, which would provide an alternative to submitting a Notice of Motion and would not limit the attendance of the Youth Assembly of North Yorkshire to once a year.

- 3.7 The Committee also considered the range of ways in which the Council currently engaged with young people which included:
- Councillor support for Youth Councils in their division.
 - Youth Councils attending Area Constituency Committee meetings.
 - Through the Young People's Champion
 - Children and young people are supported to have their voices heard through [NY Voice](#) (Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Service)
 - The Youth Cabinet - made up of leading members of all of NYC's voice groups, representing all of North Yorkshire's children and young people. The group meets regularly and has direct working links with Children and Young Peoples Service leaders. Amongst other things, the Youth Cabinet plans and runs projects and public campaigns on issues which are important to young people and is regularly consulted by the Authority and a range of its partner services when key decisions are being made.
 - Young inspectors - inspecting services delivered to children and young people, providing advice and recommendations on how those services can improve.
- 3.8 Councillor Barbara Brodigan provided an overview of her reasons for seconding the motion. She confirmed it was intended as a way to encourage more young people to engage on political issues. She acknowledged the other ways in which the Council was already engaging with young people, but suggested more could be done.
- 3.9 Committee Members had mixed views on the proposal which included:
- Area Committees would be a better place for the Youth Assembly to engage as they could comment directly on issues affecting specific areas of the County.
 - It would set a precedent if a specific group was identified as being allowed to submit a motion to full Council.
 - It would be unfair to other groups.
 - It could be considered a token gesture limiting the Youth Council to submitting a Motion only once a year.
 - Young People are more engaged in politics than ever and so there was no need to proceed as proposed.
 - The proposal created an age imbalance - what about groups representing older people.
 - The full council meeting process would not be a good mechanism for encouraging young people to engage given its strict procedural rules.
 - It should not be an issue allowing the Youth Council to submit one motion a year.
- 3.10 Noting the mixed views, the Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee voted on the proposal with the outcome as follows:
- 3 in favour
 - 11 against
 - 1 abstention.

4.0 Community Impact Assessment

- 4.1 The Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Peter Lacey (and seconded by Councillor Chris Aldred) stated:

'Reflecting the declared intent of North Yorkshire Council to become the most local large Unitary in England, and in light of this Council adopting the United Nations Sustainability and Development Goals (SDGs) as the basis for policy development, implementation and monitoring, there is a need to ensure that any decisions made by the Council are properly weighed in the light of their potential impact on local communities (SDG goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Whilst it is acknowledged that financial, legal, equalities and climate change implications of policy changes are already a requirement in the development of policy, Council accepts that decisions should also be taken in the full knowledge of any impact on local economies and the health and wellbeing of local communities (SDG goal 3: Good Health and Well-being), either in specific geographical locations or more generally.'

4.2 The Motion asked Council to:

i. Note that:

- By focusing on the local impact of decisions, the motion will support the creation of inclusive, safe, and resilient communities. It ensures that development is sustainable and beneficial to residents.
- The motion aligns with the goal of taking urgent action to combat climate.

ii. Resolve that by December 2025 it will explore and adopt appropriate means to ensure that policies and decisions made by Council are properly informed by their potential impact on local communities (SDG goal 17: Partnerships to deliver the Goals).

4.3 Councillor Peter Lacey (proposer of the Motion) was unable to attend the meeting and instead submitted a brief statement as follows:

'I am aware that the measurement of community impact by Local Authorities and other public sector organisations is in its relative infancy and that it comes with potential risks. However, I believe that identifying and following best practice elsewhere would both minimise and outweigh these risks. For this reason I would welcome a measured and considered approach to this subject by officers but also believe that an appropriate way forward can be identified and agreed by Council within the suggested 12 month timescale. Not to do so could undermine the Council's still to be realised ambition of being the most local large Unitary.'

4.4 Councillor Chris Aldred (seconded of the Motion) suggested the introduction of a similar assessment tool to that already provided on equalities and climate within the appendices of a decision making report.

4.5 The Committee noted the Authority currently had no reliable measures of community impact, and that a number of other Authorities who were attempting to provide this type of information to better inform their decision-making, were doing so with a whole series of caveats, suggesting it could not be relied upon.

4.6 Recognising the proposal would add an additional requirement to the decision-making process which would lengthen the time required in the lead up to a decision being taken, the Committee agreed that for its provision to be worthwhile, there would have to be a degree of confidence in the resulting information provided.

4.7 The also recognised that another layer of bureaucracy would be time consuming, and some Members expressed concern about assessing community impact more thoroughly, over and above the information already being provided within decision making reports, particularly given the ongoing transformational work and that planned for the future, alongside 'business as usual' work. Some suggested it would be better to concentrate on the basics i.e. delivering a good functioning council, responding to public needs.

- 4.8 Given the concerns around officer workloads, Councillor Chris Aldred proposed option (ii) as the appropriate way forward i.e.:
- ii) Acknowledge that Members and officers' availability may be limited between early December and end of January given the Christmas/New Year period and other ongoing work commitments, limiting their availability and/or the time available to fully explore the proposals/options/implications associated with the Motion, and therefore agree that all the relevant information should be provided for the Committee's consideration at its next formal meeting in March 2025, with the intention of reporting back to full Council in May 2025.
- 4.9 The committee voted on option (ii) of the report as seconded by Councillor Bryn Griffiths, which showed 2 members in favour, 11 against and 2 abstentions.
- 4.10 The Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee went on to vote on the Motion proposal and given their lack of confidence in the quality of the information that could be provided, the additional time it would add the decision making process and the added strain it would put on officer workloads, Members voted as follows:
- 2 in favour
 - 13 against
- 4.11 Based on the votes received on both Motions, the Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed not to support either Motion.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial, legal, climate change or equalities implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Council is asked to consider the recommendation of the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the following Motions are not supported:
- i. The Motion on Youth Council Engagement
 - ii. The Motion on Community Impact Assessment

Barry Khan
Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services)

County Hall, Northallerton

10 January 2025

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Background documents:

Constitution of North Yorkshire Council -

<https://edemocracy.northyorks.gov.uk/documents/s19609/NYCCConstitutionVersion2May2023.pdf>

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.