

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

26 February 2025

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY OF HEALTH COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR ANDREW LEE

The Scrutiny of Health Committee has a responsibility to review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services within the county, including Ambulance Trusts and the policies of the Health and Care Partnerships. A key part of that responsibility is requiring NHS bodies to consult health scrutiny on proposals for substantial developments or variations to local health service provision. The committee contributes to annual health checks by providing feedback to the Integrated Care Boards and the NHS Trusts serving North Yorkshire on their performance and the experiences that the committee has had with them.

Since the last full Council meeting in November 2024, the committee has met in person on 18th December 2024, to consider the following items.

Review of Issue Referred from full Council on 21 February 2024 regarding the Council's use of Glyphosate and Neonicotinoids

The committee considered a joint report from Parks and Grounds, Highways and Public Health in response to the Motion referred to the committee following full Council in February 2024 regarding removing glyphosate from council use and reducing the budget for mowing and spraying by £100,000. A report on this matter has been provided to full Council for consideration on 26th February 2025.

Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2023/24

The committee received an overview of the Director of Public Health's Annual Report for 2023/24, entitled "Live, Age Engage: healthy ageing in North Yorkshire", which is focussed on the voice of older people. The committee welcomed the report's accessibility and relevance to everyday lived experiences of ageing in the county. Members noted the relatively low proportion of adults living with dementia who receive a formal diagnosis (58.4%) versus the national average (64.8%) and the benefits of sport and activity in promoting wellbeing were discussed. It was agreed that a future item on dementia diagnosis rates could be added to the work programme, as a potential joint item with the Care and Independence Committee.

Independent Public Inquiry into the Government Handling of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Review of Module 1 Outcomes

The committee requested an overview from Public Health of the recently-published outcomes from the UK COVID-19 Inquiry relating to Resilience and Preparedness (Module 1). Key themes from the national report focussed on the complexity of emergency planning structures and a failure to learn from previous outbreaks of influenza-type diseases such as SARS.

The committee is keen to understand the local implications for the council in relation to the outcomes which continue to fall from this Inquiry. Any future pandemic affecting North Yorkshire would be different as a consequence of Local Government Reorganisation. The importance of training for councillors was acknowledged, as well as the need for support to voluntary and community organisations at the local level. Members also considered the

need for clear and open communication with residents, to build up trust with communities in the event of a future pandemic. Areas of risk for such an event were discussed, including a lack of shared health protection systems data and the role of digitisation in improving information sharing between organisations. The remaining uncertainty around the implications of long COVID were also noted.

Officers highlighted the response to the COVID pandemic, which had generally followed national guidance but also included instances of variations where it was felt local circumstances required a modified response, such as additional testing in care homes in North Yorkshire. It was emphasised that in any future event, the application of best public health practice would be at the heart of any response.

The committee will consider further relevant Module outcomes as and when they are published in due course. It has been identified with Public Health that some future Modules may be best considered at other scrutiny committees, such as Care and Independence.

Other activity by the committee

- Concerns have been raised by committee regarding the impact of changes to certain aspects of clinical provision at Scarborough Hospital. These included changes to haematology services as a consequence of lack of adequate consultant staffing and also the closure of a biomedical facility following identification of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in one wing of Scarborough Hospital. The committee Chair has contacted the York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust on these matters. Correspondence has been provided by the Trust in response in order to reassure the committee of steps being taken to ensure continued provision and representatives also attended the recent Mid-Cycle Briefing meeting to speak to the context around the haematology service.
- A workshop has been held on 24th January regarding the consultations on the NHS's 10-Year Plan. The aim of this is to capture some initial views and any concerns arising from a small comprising Members of the Health and Care and Independence committees.

Committee Work Programme

The next meeting of the committee will be at 10am on 7th March 2025 when the items currently scheduled for discussion include:

- Autism Strategy
- Hospice and End of Life Care
- Public Health commissioning
- Integrated Neighbourhood Teams: report on the new model (NY and Humber ICB)
- "We Need to Talk": Update on the Outcomes of the recent North Yorkshire and Humber ICB consultation.

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