

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Annual General Meeting

5 May 2021

STATEMENT OF THE CORPORATE & PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Since my last statement to Council in February 2021, the Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met once on 19 April 2021.

At the meeting, the Committee received a number of annual updates, which included a detailed progress update on the implementation of the Workforce Plan. We were pleased to note a slight improvement in the number of staff with protected characteristics; a drop in sickness absence; and the commencement of a re-introduction programme for furloughed staff. We again suggested the possible development of a future apprenticeship opportunity associated with Autism Plus, and the provision of staff training on dealing with people with Dementia. We also expressed concern about delays in teacher training arising as a result of the pandemic, the effect of which is likely to be felt in future years.

Finally, we were pleased to note the steps being taken to assist and support staff in their development of new working arrangements post Covid, and as Chair of the Committee, I wish to place on record the Committee's thanks to all staff for going above and beyond throughout the pandemic.

We also received an update on the resettlement of people in North Yorkshire under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme. The progress update detailed the delays caused by the pandemic and the steps taken to support refuge families across the region through a difficult year. The committee were pleased to note the resilience shown by those families and recognised the significant contribution and commitment of key staff in supporting them.

In an update on the County Council's Risk Register, our attention was drawn to the addition of two new risks - Recovery from the impact of the Coronavirus; and Local Government Reorganisation. We were reassured that once a decision regarding the Local Government Reorganisation was known, work would commence to consider the individual service risks associated with the transition to the new local government arrangements. We were particularly pleased to note that work was now underway to formulate risks registers for both North Yorkshire Highways and the Brierley Group.

Finally, the Committee received an update on the Council's Corporate Volunteering Project which detailed the impact of COVID on its delivery, with nearly all regular NYCC volunteering services either halted or significantly reduced during the lockdowns. We questioned the sustainability of the County Council's reliance on volunteers, recognising the older age demographic and queried the steps being taken to promote volunteering among younger people.

Finally, noting the development of online processes for the recruitment and management of volunteers, we expressed concern that some older volunteers may be put off by having to use online processes, and were reassured that other methods were also available for those who preferred them.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DEREK BASTIMAN