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North Yorkshire County Council

Executive

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Tuesday, 25th May 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, Patrick Mulligan, Janet Sanderson and Greg White.

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

Officers present: Richard Flinton; Gary Fielding; Barry Khan; Karl Battersby; Richard Webb; Stuart Carlton; Daniel Harry; Steve Evans and Aidan Rayner.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

578 Introductions

Members of the Executive and Corporate Management Team introduced themselves, followed by other Councillors present at the meeting.

579 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 March 2021

Having considered the draft Minutes of the formal Executive meeting held on 23 March 2021, which had been printed and circulated, members of the Executive recommended to the Chief Executive that he confirm them as a correct record.

Resolved –

The Chief Executive considered the views of the Executive provided at the meeting and decided to use his emergency powers to implement the recommendation of the Executive.

580 Declarations of Interest

County Councillor Michael Harrison declared two disclosable interests, as an employee of one of the organisations listed in Agenda item 5 - Treasury Management Appendix D, and with close family members employed at the Council. He confirmed he had two separate dispensations from the Standards Committee enabling him to remain in the meeting and vote on Agenda item 5.

581 Public Questions and Statements

There were no public questions or statements.

582 Q4 Performance Monitoring & Budget Report

Considered –

A joint report of the Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Strategic Resources

bringing together key aspects of the County Council's performance for quarter four of the 2020/21 year.

County Councillor Carl Les introduced the Quarter 4 performance monitoring and budget report, confirming the in-depth focus for the performance section of the report as being Public Health and the ambition on 'Innovative and Forward Thinking Council.'

County Councillor David Chance presented the Executive performance report summary, confirming that over the last year the County Council had led on the response to COVID-19 through its Outbreak Management Prevention Plan. He confirmed the performance report provided strong evidence of the Council's leadership and continued progress in delivering its wide-range of ambitions. He provided a brief summary of the strengths and challenges in performance across those ambitions and the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

In particular County Councillor David Chance highlighted the following:

- The vital role of Volunteers in the delivery of services and support (5,809 volunteers)
- A successful campaign for keeping the Community informed and the most vulnerable supported and protected
- The new more efficient ways of working identified during 2020-21, and the challenge of maintaining those new ways of working going forward
- Improvements in technology to better support flexible and collaborative working
- Reduced staff travel saving money, time and the environment
- The early completion of the Street Lighting Programme
- The CQC inspection results that showed the high quality of the care market across the county
- The Council's strong leadership role in the fight against Covid
- The submission of the Council's proposal for a single strong unitary Council for North Yorkshire
- The newly revised Council Plan
- The impact of Covid on the workforce and on sickness absence during 2020/21
- The challenge of supporting residents and businesses to recover from Covid and the new Growth Plan approved in March 2021
- the reduced number of repeat referrals in 2020/21 and a reduction in the number of children in care
- Post pandemic, the Council's role in supporting economic recovery for residents and businesses
- The pressure on frontline teams as a result of increased hospital discharges
- An increase in housebuilding locally and an increase in the cost of new builds
- The stability of long and short term residential and nursing placements
- **The increased number of young people with EHCPs, and the increase in time taken to issue an EHCP, which was expected to recover by the end of the Summer term.**
- **The number of North Yorkshire primary and secondary schools with a Good or Outstanding Ofsted inspection outcome remains below the that of the Local Authority's national comparators**

Public Health

County Councillor Caroline Dickson introduced the in depth focus on Public Health which detailed the Council's direct response to COVID-19 and its impact on commissioned services. She noted the excellent collaborative working with partners that had resulted in the successful delivery of the County's response to COVID, and confirmed that 97% of those 50+ had received their first vaccination, and 87% of those 80+ had received both vaccinations.

County Councillor Caroline Dickson went on to highlight:

- The reduced client uptake in Council's commissioned services over the year;
- The report from Services of reduced referrals from GPs, which would need to be monitored going forward;
- An increase in Mental Health anxiety reported nationally;
- The prioritising of work with partners to identify a range of interventions to tackle obesity in adults and children;

In response to questions from County Councillor John Ennis, it was confirmed:

- Vaccination had been a tried and tested public health intervention for many years and the lessons learnt from past vaccination programmes had supported the roll out of the COVID vaccination programme. The barriers to vaccine take-up and the behavioural science behind vaccine hesitancy were being looked at to draw out the lessons from those programmes;
- The need for face to face appointments still existed, particularly for young children, but for some Services, the introduction of online access had proved of benefit e.g. the Stop Smoking Service. Therefore the future offer was likely to be a blend of digital and face to face delivery;
- The Child Measurement Programme which provided surveillance data nationally, which was halted during the pandemic following Government guidance, was recently re-started at Easter;
- The Healthy Child Programme provided prevention and targeted intervention – a multi-faceted holistic approach, to maintaining a healthy weight and a healthy life. Also linked to a healthy school standard, providing good advice and support around nutrition;

County Councillor John Ennis was also pleased to note the introduction of a new specialist Drug and Alcohol Service for young people and the successful bid to the National Institute for Health Research.

County Councillor Paul Haslem welcomed the Performance Report but suggested there needed to be a clearer focus on the importance of nutrition. He suggested the amount of money spent on guiding nutrition should be looked at. County Councillor Caroline Dickinson confirmed nutrition was included within all the healthy child programmes and healthy school awards etc, and County Councillor Gareth Dadd suggested a balanced approach was needed.

Innovative and Forward Thinking Council

County Councillor Stanley Lumley noted the massive changes to ways of working as a result of the pandemic and the savings made in terms of time, cost and carbon emissions.

In response to his questions, it was confirmed:

- The needs of the organisation
- The lessons learnt from the changes implemented during the pandemic and the benefits that had been derived from those changes would inform the way forward;
- It was unlikely there would be a significant level of return to working in offices before September 2021;
- Thereafter, a blended approach would be implemented subject to the needs of County Council customers and the appropriate delivery of Council services;
- The welfare of staff working from home would remain a key focus
- Work already underway to rationalise the Authority's property portfolio as part of the Modern Council approach had been accelerated because of the steps taken in response to the pandemic. The outcome of the LGR would be another key opportunity

for change;

- Whilst the budget included savings as a result of the pandemic e.g. from a reduction in corporate travel, it was not expected that the same level of savings would be achieved going forward once some Services returned to the pre-Covid delivery mechanisms;

County Councillor Stanley Lumley suggested the reported reduction in carbon emissions did not fully reflect the true picture, as the increased emissions from households, from homeworking and from increased server emissions by the County Council had not been offset. It was noted the configuration of County Hall was set up for data going out but in recent times it had been data going in, which the Technology & Change team were addressing. It was suggested that the change in carbon emissions as a result of the pandemic would be best captured at a national level although levels were likely to rise again once the public ability to travel more, moved back up to pre-Covid levels.

County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson queried whether more could be done to provide a career path through the Council, and it was confirmed that County Council already had a good record for that both through the apprenticeship and graduate programmes. County Councillor Gareth Dadd confirmed the Council's excellent record on apprenticeships using the apprenticeship levy – 110 in the Care Sector and 21 in the Construction Sector. In regard to LGR, he suggested there would be increased career paths and opportunities for Council staff transferring across into the new structure.

Growth

County Councillor Don Mackenzie drew attention to Business and environmental projects listed on page 56 of the report and highlighted the successful completion of the street lighting programme 2years ahead of schedule and the saving made as a result, and recorded his thanks to the street lighting team for their work.

Those thanks were reiterated by County Councillor Derek Bastiman who also questioned what more the County Council could do in conjunction with the LEP to support small and medium size business in response to both the pandemic and Brexit.

County Councillor Andrew Lee confirmed there were already signs of businesses of all sizes getting to grips with the changes required as a result of Brexit, and that support for businesses would continue through partners in the LEP so that they could take best advantage of the emerging opportunities. He also noted that Trading Standards were providing free advice to businesses to help them recover from the pandemic in the lead up to the end of furlough in September.

In regard to the High Street Fund, it was confirmed the County Council was working with partners to put forward ideas and advise on how the money should be spent. It was noted the County Council held positions on both Boards (Whitby and Scarborough), and looked to influence the most appropriate use of the monies.

In regard to affordable housing, it was noted that Brierley Homes looked for the best opportunities for its investments, and took account of the demand for affordable housing and planning etc.

Healthy & Independent Living

Attention was drawn to the graph on page 63 of the report which showed care home rates across the County and the clear issue in the Harrogate area, where 90% of care homes placements were over the County Councils approved rates. It was suggested the rates in the area was caused by a range of factors – the limited availability of workforce in the area, and the age demographic of the area meaning demand was outstripping supply. As a way of intervening in the market, Members noted the plan to purchase land to take forward a scheme for social care in the area.

Richard Webb, Corporate Director for Health & Adult Services confirmed that some parts of the Service had already seen a significant increase in activity since the first lockdown, with a big increase in assessments and increases in Living Well. It was confirmed that as more restrictions were lifted activity would continue to rise. It was noted that some of the changes implemented in Health and Social Care delivery during the pandemic would remain post Covid, taking advantage of the efficiency savings and technology improvements.

Best Start in Life

County Councillor Janet Sanderson confirmed referrals at the front door were being monitored to ensure the appropriate capacity and flexibility within the Social work team was available and the ability to shift resources around to meet demand. She also confirmed:

- a focus on mental health issues going forward;
- the Authority was now seeing the benefits from its social work apprenticeship scheme, which was now in its third year;
- dental appointments for looked after Children remained a concern;
- a backlog in young people awaiting court proceedings;
- Looked After Children

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan confirmed any drop in performance in schools could likely be attributed to the impact of Covid, but with no Ofsted inspections it was hard to properly assess. He also drew attention to changes to Ofsted's framework for inspections and issues around school funding, which would likely have a greater impact on small rural schools. He confirmed proposals were being put to the Government to address it. He also confirmed he was against the idea of extending the school day to enable pupils to catch up of missed school work as a result of school closures.

Stuart Halliday - Corporate Director for Children's Services, confirmed there was national discussion ongoing around catch up for pupils post Covid, with the some additional funding for schools. It was recognised that schools would be best placed to identify those children in need of additional support. He also confirmed the Authority's concerns arising from the changes to the Ofsted framework for inspections and the work ongoing to identify those schools needing additional school improvement support.

County Councillor Janet Jefferson expressed concern around the increase in the number of children in elective home education. She questioned the quality of education being provided, and what was being done to encourage those families to return their children to mainstream schooling. It was noted that it would require a change in legislation to give the Authority powers to intervene. However, steps had been taken to strengthen the Authority's capacity to support and assist parents to make an informed choice.

County Councillor Carl Les thanked Scrutiny Members for their contributions and performance officers for the quality of the update report.

Revenue

County Councillor Gareth Dadd introduced the section of the report on the revenue budget, highlighting the volatile nature of the 2020/21 financial year in terms of budgetary planning. He drew attention to the <£400m net spend, supplemented by a further <£100m additional Covid funding from the Government. He confirmed the Authority remained in good shape but was not yet out of the woods regarding the pandemic, as additional Covid funding tapered away.

He noted the impacts of Covid would continue in the medium term e.g. a probable rise in demand for social care, supply chain pressures and procurement etc, alongside Local Government Reorganisation. He was therefore pleased to note the £9m underspend at this stage but accepted it would likely be the current financial year progressed. He

drew specific attention to some of the casualties of Covid e.g. parts of adult social care, and the impact of Covid on the MTFs as detailed on page 100 of the report and therefore the need to strive for further savings moving forward.

Treasury Management & Prudential Indicators

County Councillor Gareth Dadd introduced the section of the report on Treasury Management highlighting the fairly good returns on interest being achieved on cash balances and returns on commercial investments which were proving to be a worthwhile venture. In regard to the Authority's external companies, it was noted they were not on preferential interest rates for their capital financing loans from the Authority, as had been reported. They were in fact on commercial rates of 6% plus base. Finally, it was noted that property funds managed by third parties were achieving well and a possible solar farm project was approaching business case stage.

Capital Plan & Expenditure 2020/21

In regard to the Capital Plan and Expenditure, County Councillor Gareth Dadd highlighted the delays resulting from Covid which were expected to reduce over time. Gary Fielding, Corporate Director for Strategic Resources confirmed the underspends would have no net impact on funding for the County Council.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan left the meeting at 12:33pm.

As there was no questions arising, on any of the above sections of the report, County Councillor Carl Les referred Members to the recommendations on page 163 in the report.

Having considered the report and the information provided at the meeting, the nine remaining members of the Executive agreed to note:

- i. the latest position for the County Council's 2020/21 Revenue Budget, as summarised in paragraph 2.1.2.
- ii. the position on the General Working Balance (paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.3)
- iii. the position on the 'Strategic Capacity – Unallocated' reserve (paragraphs 2.4.4 to 2.4.5)
- iv. the performance of the Treasury Management operation during 2020/21 and the outturn position on Prudential Indicators
- v. the position on capital outturn as detailed in Appendices A to E

Those members of the Executive also agreed to recommend to the Chief Executive that using his delegate powers, he:

- vi. Approve the proposed funding of £75k from the Strategic Capacity Reserve to develop a full business case for potential investment in solar power generation, as detailed in paragraph 3.64 of the report;
- vii. Recommend to the County Council, the proposed carry forward to 2021/22 of the net capital underspend totalling £13.3m as set out in paragraph 4.14 of the report;
- viii. Approve the financing of capital expenditure as detailed in paragraph 4.16 of the report and Appendix F;
- ix. Approve the proposed acquisition of land on the east side of Beckwith Head Road, Beckwith, Harrogate as detailed in paragraph 4.28 of the report;

Resolved –

The Chief Executive considered the report, additional information provided at the meeting and the views of the Executive, and resolved to implement the recommendations of the Executive.

Programme

Considered –

A report of the Corporate Director for Business and Environmental Services seeking approval to undertake preliminary and detailed design of the recommended highways options for the Transforming Cities Fund programme following Public Consultation.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd left the meeting at 12:36pm.

It was noted that emails had been received from two members of the public and a response had been issued by the Corporate Director.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie presented the report which detailed the County Council's progress on leading on a £31.1m programme with its partners at Skipton and Selby District Councils and Harrogate Borough Council, under a funding agreement with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Karl Battersby, Corporate Director for Business & Environmental Services provided an overview of the report focussing on the County Council's lead role on delivering the programme within a tight timescale, the consultation that had taken place on each of the proposed schemes, and the resulting findings.

He provided an outline of the two options for Station Parade in Harrogate and the plan for the eastern section of James Street. He confirmed further detailed design and modelling works were required to understand the impact of those plans on the highway. He also noted a TRO would be required for James Street.

He went on to outline the other two schemes in Selby and Skipton and confirmed the next steps to progress all three projects, which included some further public consultation later in 2021. He confirmed there would be a focus on ensuring the schemes had no negative impact on local businesses.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie took the opportunity to reassure the business community in Harrogate who had lobbied strongly regarding the gateway scheme, that the proposal was not intended to make it more difficult for them and their customers to travel to Harrogate, but rather to attract more visitors to the town centre.

County Councillor Carl Les stressed there would be further opportunities for members of the public to provide feedback on the proposals.

Specifically in regard to the modelling for the Harrogate scheme, County Councillor Michael Harrison noted that it would need to take account of it being the main north south route through the town. Any negative impact on travel times for through traffic would need to be balanced against the positive impacts from the scheme. County Councillor Paul Haslem suggested case studies from other part pedestrianised town centres should be considered to understand the benefits gained, in order to give some balance to the fears of retailers being expressed.

Karl Battersby, Corporate Director for Business & Environmental Services confirmed the modelling work had been based on regional traffic growth pre-covid, considered to be the worst case scenario.

Having considered the report and the information provided at the meeting, the eight members of the Executive present at the meeting agreed to recommend to the Chief Executive that using his delegated powers, he:

- i) Approve the taking forward of the highway proposals for the Transforming Cities Fund

projects in Harrogate, Skipton and Selby, for preliminary and detailed design and consultation, subject to the following:

- (a) further design and consultation is undertaken on the Harrogate 1 Lane Station Parade option only;
- (b) further design and consultation is undertaken on James Street based on full pedestrianisation incorporating the ability to retain an unobstructed width such that traffic could be accommodated if necessary;
- (c) a Final Business Case will be presented prior to implementation and a further decision from the Executive will be sought to agree any recommended implementation of the final designs later in 2021;
- (d) decisions on how to progress with the variant options at Selby which do not directly affect the existing highway network are delegated to the Corporate Director for BES working with Selby District Council and Network Rail.

Resolved:

The Chief Executive considered the report, additional information provided at the meeting and the views of the Executive, and resolved to implement the recommendations of the Executive.

584 Appointments to Outside Bodies

Considered –

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) seeking approval to extend the existing appointments to the Outside Bodies to the end of the current Council in May 2022, and to appoint one member and a substitute to the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Having considered the proposals in the report and additional proposals put forward by the Leader at the meeting, members of the Executive agreed to recommend to the Chief Executive that using his delegated powers, he approve:

- i. An amendment to the name of County Councillor Michael Harrison's Executive Member portfolio post to – Executive Member for Adult Social Care & Health Integration, including Health & Wellbeing Board and Extra Care;
- ii. The extension of existing appointments to the Outside Bodies, to the end of the current Council in May 2022;
- iii. The appointment of County Councillor Caroline Goodrick and County Councillor Helen Swiers (as a Substitute) to the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Board;
- iv. Two Executive Members appointments – County Councillor Michael Harrison to Humber Coast & Vale Integrated Care System, and County Councillor Caroline Dickinson to West Yorkshire & Harrogate Integrated Care System;

Resolved:

The Chief Executive considered the report, additional information provided at the meeting and the views of the Executive, and resolved to implement the recommendations of the Executive.

585 Area Constituency Committee Feedback Report

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Democratic Services) providing an overview of the key issues considered at recent Area Constituency Committee meetings.

As members of the Executive had no questions, they agreed to note the report. The Leader also expressed his thanks to the local MPs for their continued attendance at the Area Constituency Committee meetings.

586 Forward Plan

Considered –

The Forward Plan for the period 17 May 2021 to 31 May 2022 was presented.

Resolved - That the Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.57 pm.

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