

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 July 2021

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF SCRUTINY BOARD

Members will be aware that Scrutiny Board brings together the Chairs of the five thematic overview and scrutiny committees at the Council and the Older Peoples' and Young People's Champions. It provides an opportunity for a whole council view of scrutiny activity, which avoids gaps and overlaps and helps establish a lead committee for areas of joint interest. It also provides a forum in which the key performance issues for the Council can be reviewed and items for further scrutiny identified.

The scrutiny function was created to act as a check on and balance to the executive and it is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements.

There have been two meetings of Scrutiny Board since my last statement to Council.

The meeting of Scrutiny Board on 21 May 2021 focussed upon the scrutiny of the Q4 Performance and Finance Management Report, ahead of the members of the Board attending the meeting of the Executive on 25 May 2021. Some of the issues raised at the Executive meeting by members of the Scrutiny Board are highlighted below:

- The Covid-19 vaccination rate in the county and whether there are significant numbers of people declining to have the vaccine. If so, then what is the Council doing to improve the take up.
- What more could the Council do to help ensure that NHS Health Checks are optimised and so more prevent some long term health conditions emerging in people who may be at risk.
- Concern that inequalities may be increasing as a result of the pandemic and successive lockdowns as a number of factors coincide. Such as, economic hardship and uncertainty, children falling behind at school during two periods of sustained home schooling, access to health and social care services being limited or avoided.
- Whether the Council can do more to create career paths for young people in the Council.
- Recognition of the huge effort that has been maintained by Technology and Change at the Council in sustaining 1,000s of staff working from home over the past 15 months and also enabling them to adopt new ways of working.
- The benefit of remote working over the past 12 months in terms of time, cost and carbon dioxide emissions.
- Whether the sustained working from home has led to a better work-life balance or whether employees now facing even greater demands and longer hours.
- The impact upon adult social care services of the reduction in contacts with NHS and social care services over the past year, as a result of the pandemic and the long waiting lists for elective procedures at hospital.
- A concern as to whether, with all of the changes to the OFSTED inspection regime, we really understand how well our schools are performing.

At the meeting of the Scrutiny Board on 21 May 2021, members also discussed: the work that the overview and scrutiny committees are doing on the recovery from the pandemic and how it has changed the way that some services are delivered; the way in which overview and scrutiny committees could be held going forwards (in-person, remotely, hybrid or a

combination thereof); and the committee work programmes over the next 3 cycles of committee meetings prior to the May 2022 Council elections.

Scrutiny Board also met on 23 June 2021 to review a draft Carbon Reduction Plan for the Council, which is due to be considered at the meeting of the Executive on 13 July 2021. Whilst Scrutiny Board is a private meeting and not a formal meeting of the Council's scrutiny function, it gave the Chairs of the committees an opportunity to review the draft plan and comment ahead of the Executive meeting. Board members welcomed the plan and highlighted a number of issues, as follows:

- Acknowledgement that carbon reduction technology will advance rapidly over the next 10 years and that the shape and form of this may yet be unknown
- Concerns that there was a significant challenge in providing a comprehensive car charging infrastructure, particularly in rural areas and also in urban areas where on street parking is the norm
- Whether national power generators and suppliers will be able to cope with the increase in demand for electricity as people switch from fossil fuels
- What work is being done by the Council to exploit renewable energy sources across the county and whether greater use could be made of Council owned property and land as a site for some of these technologies
- Concerns about increasing inequalities and whether people on low incomes will be able to adapt to climate change (making the move to electric cars or electric domestic heating, for example), without financial support, most likely through government loans and schemes
- Whether Brierley Homes is being adventurous and inventive enough in constructing properties bearing in mind future opportunities that may arise from improvements in both the Building Design and Technology sectors.

Scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan, once agreed, will be led by the Transport Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (TE&E OSC). Scrutiny Board will help co-ordinate the scrutiny of any matters that require specialist input outside of the TE&E OSC.

Members of Scrutiny Board are next due meet in mid-August 2021. At that meeting, the Executive Q1 Performance and Finance Management Report will be scrutinised. Further consideration will also be given to the way in which Scrutiny Board can access additional sources of information and intelligence to help inform the development of the committee work programmes.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DEREK BASTIMAN
Chairman of Scrutiny Board
30 June 2021