

# Minutes

## Scrutiny Committee

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Venue:	Meeting Room 2 - Civic Centre, Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9FT
Date:	Thursday, 4 July 2019
Time:	5.00 pm
Present:	Councillors Shaw-Wright (Chair), W Nichols (Vice-Chair), M Jordan, J McCartney, N Reader and M Topping
Officers present:	Julie Slatter, Director of Corporate Services and Commissioning, Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer, Stuart Robinson, Head of Business Development and Improvement, Peter Williams, Head of Finance NYCC, Sarah Thompson, Environmental Health and Housing Manager, Victoria Foreman, Democratic Services Officer
Others present:	Councillors R Packham, I Chilvers and C Lunn, Becky Case, Head of Transformation and Delivery, Vale of York CCG, Chris Dexter, Managing Director of Patient Transport Services at Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Geoff Lomas, Lead Countryside and Woodland Advisor Land & Property, Yorkshire Water Services Ltd
Public:	0
Press:	0

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### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Sweeting and P Welburn. Councillor M Jordan was in attendance as a substitute on behalf of Councillor Welburn.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor M Topping.

### **2 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Councillor M Jordan declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 –

Vale of York CCG and Yorkshire Ambulance Service, as his son was a paramedic for the Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

### **3 MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2019.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**To approve the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 March 2019 for signing by the Chair.**

### **4 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and thanked the Labour Group for nominating him as Chair the Scrutiny Committee. He also thanked Councillor W Nichols for her work as Chair of the Committee during the past few years.

The Chair emphasised the need for scrutiny at Selby to be more vigorous and vigilant and to continue to improve.

*Members noted that Councillors R Packham and I Chilvers were in attendance at the meeting, and had been given permission to speak and ask questions by the Chair.*

### **5 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND EXECUTIVE MEETING DATES 2019-20 (S/19/1)**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which asked the Committee to agree items for inclusion on the Work Programme 2019-20, note the meeting dates for the Executive in 2019-20 and agree Scrutiny Committee Member attendance at these meetings.

Members noted that the Committee's work programme should effectively scrutinise and contribute to supporting service improvement and delivery against the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, and progress the relationship between the Scrutiny Committee and the Executive to facilitate the development of scrutiny at Selby.

A number of issues were suggested for inclusion on the work programme for 2019-20; planning enforcement and the use of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 215 Regulations, public engagement, housing and CEFs.

Members felt that there were a number of issues on the work programme which could be removed and that amendments could continue to be made throughout the year. The Committee agreed that the current agenda was too full.

The Chair indicated that he would be setting up mid-cycle briefings for  
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scrutiny, and that invitations to attend the Chair's briefing would be extended to Members from the Conservative, Independent and Yorkshire Party Groups.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. **To agree the Work Programme for 2019-20 subject to the inclusion of additional items on planning enforcement, the use of Section 215 Regulations, public engagement, housing and CEFs.**
- ii. **To note the Executive meeting dates in 2019-20.**
- iii. **To agree the establishment of mid-cycle briefings and that invitations to attend the Chair's briefings would be extended to Members from the Conservative, Independent and Yorkshire Party Groups.**

**6 VALE OF YORK CCG AND YORKSHIRE AMBULANCE SERVICE**

The Committee welcomed to the meeting Becky Case, Head of Transformation and Delivery at NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and Chris Dexter from Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust (YAS).

Ms Case gave details to the Committee of the recent contractual changes for patient transport services in the CCG's area. It had been felt that the previous contract was not fit for purpose and had prevented the CCG from being able to transport patients home from hospital, as well as to and from appointments, in a timely manner. Consultation had been undertaken across the CCG area, with a particular emphasis on communications with renal patients, who used the patient transport service on a regular basis.

Members noted that the feedback from the public and patients had been that they were left waiting for too long, and that transport at weekends and early mornings was not as effective as it should be.

Ms Case went on to explain that the CCG had done a lot of market engagement with a number of different providers, and at the core of this had been the need for the service not to be tied to specific sites or times; flexibility was required for the service to work efficiently and in the best interests of patients. During the subsequent procurement process, YAS had been successful as they had demonstrated flexibility with a willingness to develop the services provided. The contract with YAS had come into force on 1 July 2018 with better capacity provided and a dedicated team member from YAS working with renal patients.

The Committee acknowledged that whilst the eligibility criteria for the use of patient transport services had not changed, the assessment of

potential patients had been made easier; questions used in the assessments were more targeted and an appeal process meant that anyone not approved for transport could make representations for reconsideration. Overall the first year of operation with YAS had gone well; there had been a few complaints but in general capacity was improved and patients were happy with the service.

Mr Dexter explained that as the provider of the service, YAS was the first line of contact with patients. Members noted that the service had a call centre in Wakefield, where call handlers would take the initial phone call from a patient requesting transport, and would ask a number of questions about mobility and medical need. The process was reviewed on a quarterly basis and there was consistent engagement with patients and ongoing changes to continue to improve the service.

Members asked for examples of other providers that had bid for the contract, and it was noted that there had been expressions of interest initially from 19 different organisations, which had eventually been narrowed down to four. Ms Case was unable to give details of the other bidders for the contract, but offered to take the query away to find out if she was legally able to do so; if so, she would supply the details to Members at a later date.

Committee Members expressed concern regarding some patients having been denied transport services when it was clear that they were in need of such assistance, especially those that lived in more rural communities where public transport was not always a viable option. It was felt that there were a number of other issues outside of medical need and mobility that should be taken into consideration when judging an individual's eligibility for the service, such as dementia.

Members noted that should a person be judged as ineligible for transport services, they would be given advice and signposted to other services that could help them. Ms Case and Mr Dexter explained that they were conscious of a number of different factors when making a decision about transport eligibility, and that any specific cases that Members were aware of could be referred to them directly to be looked into.

The Chair and the Committee thanked Ms Case and Mr Dexter for attending.

## **7 YORKSHIRE WATER: FUTURE OF BRAYTON BARFF**

The Committee welcomed to the meeting Geoff Lomas, Lead Countryside and Woodland Advisor from Yorkshire Water.

Mr Lomas gave a presentation to the Committee on his role at Brayton Barff, including ownership, access routes, site uses, visitor satisfaction, visitor profiles and woodland management and challenges (both recent and future) such as Himalayan Balsam, graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

Members asked if Yorkshire Water would consider running forest schools at the Barff. Mr Lomas explained that if the appropriate planning and risk management was undertaken by a group wishing to run such an event, a licence could be issued to do this.

The Committee noted that the woodland management such as tree felling was an essential part of the work that Mr Lomas and his team did at the Barff, as it ensured the survival of the woodland beyond the immediate future into the decades to come. Mixed species of tree such as cherry, hornbeam and lime were being planted in order to ensure diversity in the stock for the woodland's future resilience.

Members felt that better advertising was needed to publicise the need to fell trees in order to assure the public that such works were planned and necessary.

The Committee noted that any efforts to control grey squirrel numbers would be difficult to manage due to the fact that there was little public support for it outside of areas where there were competing red squirrel populations.

Members queried what could be done to tackle anti-social behaviour on the Barff, such as overnight camping, littering and campfires. Mr Lomas explained that out of hours it was difficult to monitor and prevent as there were not the staff available to be 'on the ground' at all times. In the first instance it should be reported to the Police.

Mr Lomas explained that the area he and his team managed for Yorkshire Water stretched over many miles, and that partnership working with organisations such as the Friends of Brayton Barff and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust was essential in ensuring sites continued to be managed appropriately.

The Committee noted that dog fouling on the Barff was an ongoing issue, and that further preventative work could be undertaken in partnership with the Council; the Director of Corporate Services and Commissioning confirmed that she would provide her contact details in order for further discussions to be had on the matter.

The Chair thanked Mr Lomas for attending and for the presentation he had given to the Committee.

## **8 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19 (S/19/2)**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which asked the Committee to approve the Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018-19 and make any comments or suggestions as to how the format of the Committee's Annual Report could be improved for future years.

Members noted that the Scrutiny Committee was required, under Article 6 of the Constitution, to prepare an annual report reviewing its work during

the previous municipal year.

The Committee confirmed that they were happy with the contents of the Annual Report 2018-19 as set out in the agenda.

**RESOLVED:**

**To approve the Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018-19.**

**9 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 2018-19 (JANUARY TO MARCH) AND YEAR END 2018-19 (S/19/3)**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Business Development and Improvement which asked the Committee to consider the contents and make any comments on the Council's performance.

The quarterly performance report provided a progress update on delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-20 as measured by a combination of progress against priority projects/high level actions and performance against KPIs. The report also included a year-end summary of progress on delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2020 as measured by year-end performance against KPIs in 2018/19 compared with year end data for KPIs in 2017/18. The report had been considered by the Executive at its meeting on 13 June 2019.

The Committee noted that performance had improved or exceeded targets in relation to the number of SMEs supported, the percentage of repairs to Council-owned properties completed within agreed timescales, the number of missed bins per 1,000 collections, the number of visits to combined leisure centres, the average days taken to process new benefit claims, the processing of planning applications, wait times at the Customer Contact Centre, housing delivery and provision of homes in the District.

However, performance in relation to the average time taken to re-let vacant Council homes, staff sickness days, Council housing rent and arrears collection and planned savings targets had not gone so well.

Members queried what action would be taken in relation to those performance figures that were not at target, and how long Officers thought it would be before they reached target.

In relation to housing voids, Officers explained that there had been a number of issues that had impacted on the Council's performance, such as staff turnover. Additional investment had been approved to support the service, and it was acknowledged by Members that some properties required a great deal of remedial work that could take months. Some KPIs were being amended in order to give a truer picture of performance, but Members were advised that housing void turnaround times may get worse before they got better. Officers also explained the impact of Universal Credit on housing rent arrears, which had caused a lag in rent collection

for the Council.

The Committee also queried the potential work of the Council with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), who had approached the authority with a view to releasing employment opportunities in Sherburn and Selby to people from areas of high deprivation in the Leeds and Wakefield 5 towns area. DWP had access to central funding to support Access to Employment, offering the potential to deliver a supported transport solution feeding into the employment areas. Members were concerned that there were residents living in areas of deprivation within the District that should have the opportunity to access these jobs before they were offered to people from Leeds and Wakefield, and that there was the potential for a net loss of houses if they were offered to those who came to work in the District from elsewhere. Officers confirmed that they would supply more information to Members on the matter after the meeting; it was also acknowledged that lack of public transport between employment sites and residential areas was a real barrier to accessing work for a number of residents.

Lastly, it was queried by Members if the KPIs as set out in the performance report were audited; Officers confirmed that small samples of the KPIs were audited each year by Veritau. It was suggested that in general, more summarisation in the performance report would be helpful.

**RESOLVED:**

**To note the Council's performance for Quarter 4 2018-19 (January to March) and Year End 2018-19.**

**10 FINANCIAL RESULTS AND BUDGET EXCEPTIONS REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2019 (S/19/4)**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked the Committee to consider the contents of the report and make any comments on the Council's financial results and budget exceptions.

Members noted that after carry forward requests the Council's year end results for 2018/19 showed a surplus of (£59k) on the General Fund against budget. There were a number of variances (positive & negative) which made up the surplus, including: a shortfall on planned savings, in year staffing savings, lower planning income, changes in waste and recycling income and higher investment income. It was proposed that the surplus be transferred to the Contingency Reserve to support future spending needs.

Officers explained that the Housing Revenue Account showed a significant surplus of (£753k), which was mainly driven by lower external borrowing requirements due to delays in progressing the housing development programme. The surplus would be transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve to help fund future capital expenditure.

The Committee acknowledged that planned savings for the year were

achieved in the Housing Revenue Account. However, General Fund savings had fallen short by £225k as some initiatives had slipped into 2019/20.

Members noted that capital programme spend had been significantly under budget as a number of projects had experienced delays and were to be carried forward into 2019/20. After assumed carry forwards, a saving of (£688k) had been achieved - (£91k) General Fund and (£597k) Housing Revenue Account. The General Fund saving related to a low take up from the private sector for Repair Loans for emergency repairs and planned works to the leisure centre not being required. In the Housing Revenue Account, Byram Park Road project has been completed with a saving of (£597k), primarily due to receipt of a grant to help fund the project.

The Programme for Growth (P4G) continued with the programme set and approved by Members. In 2018/19 spending had totalled £2.005m with a further £7.859m of funding rolling into future years. The P4G projects were to be delivered over multiple years, and were therefore shown in the report as total project value rather than in year delivery.

Members queried the number of council houses that had been delivered and the delay to the adoption of a road at some Council owned industrial units. Officers explained that there had been issues around the road adoption which had caused some problems. With regards to the net delivery of council homes, there had been 13 in 2018-19 and 15 in 2017-18; it was acknowledged that this needed to improve and that upcoming work on revision of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan would address the matter further.

Officers acknowledged that the Council's Housing Development Programme had been delayed but that different package schemes were being explored in order to get better value for money; Members were pleased to note that the money set aside for affordable housing was in the Council's reserves and could not be used for any other projects.

The Committee acknowledged that any surpluses in the HRA went back into it for the capital programme.

Officers confirmed that the disposal of council homes was through the Right to Buy Scheme, which the Council could not control because tenants that were eligible to purchase their homes could do so if they so wished.

Lastly, Members queried the amount of rent that Align Property Services, who had recently moved in to the Civic Centre offices, were paying; Officers confirmed that the rent was £12k a year.

**RESOLVED:**

**To note the Council's financial results and budget exceptions to 31 March 2019 (Quarter 4).**

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## **11 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2018-19 (S/19/5)**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked Members to consider the contents of the report and make any comments on the Council's treasury management. The report reviewed the Council's borrowing and investment activity (Treasury Management) for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 (Q4) and presented performance against the Prudential Indicators.

Members noted that on average the Council's treasury deposits totalled £63.413m over the year at an average rate of 0.81%, earning interest of £518k, which was £279k above budget. In line with the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy, general fund income above £300k should be transferred to the contingency reserve, resulting in year-end transfer of £56k.

Officers went on to explain that a budget of £5m was approved to invest in property funds, split equally between Blackrock and Threadneedle. As previously reported entry fees of £76k were treated as revenue expenses and offset against returns in year one, resulting in net income of £6k and a closing investment value of £4.93m, a loss of 0.69% (£34.2k) against the original investment. Excluding entry fees, the funds achieved a combined return revenue return of 4.13%

It was acknowledged by Members that during 2018/19 interest earned on loans to SDHT was £18k, in relation to Kirkgate and St Joseph's street Tadcaster. Long-term borrowing had totalled £59.3m at 31 March 2019, interest payments of £2.49m had been made during 2018/19, a saving of £0.37m against budget, which was due to deferral of borrowing assumed for the Housing Development Programme. The Council had no short term borrowing in place as at 31 March 2018, and had not undertaken any during 2018/19. The Council's affordable limits for borrowing were not breached during this period.

The Committee asked if it would be more prudent to reduce borrowing in the current economic climate; Officers explained that at the moment there would be penalties to repaying the loans, but it was something that was kept under review on a regular basis.

Members queried the relatively low property investment return levels which were around 4%, to which Officers responded by explaining that the Council had spread its investment more widely to reduce and manage risk and as such the return was slightly lower.

Members asked for an update on the two former Natwest bank properties in Selby and Tadcaster that the Council had been purchased; Officers confirmed that the Council was currently in negotiations to sell the Selby property.

### **RESOLVED:**

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**To note the Council's treasury management update for Quarter 4.**

**12 REVIEW OF COMMUNITY CENTRES (S/19/6)**

The Committee received the report of the Housing and Environmental Health Service Manager which asked them to confirm that they wished to continue with the review, agree the proposed scope and methodology and establish a Task and Finish Group.

Members noted that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funded Community Centres and their sustainability remained a key issue for Members and residents alike. Officers explained that it was important to understand their current position in the community and how tenants and residents currently use them, and how they may wish to use them in future.

The Committee were informed that reviews of Community Centres had previously taken place, most notably in 2010 following a report to the Social Board. The decision was made to sell the poorly used centre at Womersley and convert the centre at Kellington into a residential unit. This left the Council with the current 10 centres:

- Anne Sharpe Centre, St Edwards Close, Byram
- Westfield Court Centre, Westfield Court, Eggborough
- Coultish Centre, Charles Street, Selby
- Cunliffe Centre, Petre Avenue, Selby
- Harold Mills House, North Crescent, Sherburn-in-Elmet
- Lady Popplewell Centre, Beechwood Close, Sherburn-in-Elmet
- Grove House, Grove Crescent, South Milford
- Calcaria House, Windmill Rise, Tadcaster
- Kelcbar, Kelcbar Close, Tadcaster
- Rosemary House, Rosemary Court

Members acknowledged that reviewing the Community Centres had been suggested as a piece of work in June 2015, following a proposal from Councillor Buckle. Primary concerns had been raised around the poor use of the centres, running costs and lack of community engagement. Considerable discussions had taken place between the Committee and Lead Officer for Community Support, but it was felt that a Task and Finish Group was not required at that stage. However, it was agreed that work would be undertaken to try and address the issues raised by Committee as to the use of the centres.

Officers explained that the review was intended to consider how Community Centres were currently being used and how better use could be made of them in the future. It was proposed that the scope of the review would:

- Determine current level of use and public satisfaction with the

centres.

- Look at current management models at each centre.
- Confirm the cost of providing the centres to the HRA.
- Explore potential alternative delivery models.
- Explore whether the current service offer meets the future needs of tenants and residents; and if not, what future model might best achieve this.

It was proposed that the review be completed over a 6 month period and would include the following:

- Scrutiny Committee to decide Task and Finish Group Members.
- Officers to provide base line information (costs, condition, level of usage, current management arrangements and constitutions) to support initial fact finding work.
- Co-operative between Scrutiny Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel to generate a consultation survey.
- Tenant Participation Officer to oversee tenant and resident consultation.
- Site visits to the Community Centres to help understand the usage.
- Benchmark against other local authority practices in relation to Community Centres, with the potential for site visits.

Members agreed that different solutions may be appropriate for each centre, and a wide range of options should be considered.

The Committee acknowledged that there was a great deal of potential in a number of the centres which had the capacity for much more use by the wider community, and which could be marketed better; however, it was noted that there was hesitancy by the managing committees of some of the centres to allow more people to use them.

Members also noted that Selby District Council staff were based in some of the centres around the District, such as Calcaria House in Tadcaster and Harold Mills House in Sherburn in Elmet. The importance of meaningful discussions and consultation with the management committees of the centres was emphasised by Members.

Lastly, it was agreed that membership of the Task and Finish Group should be decided by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- To confirm that the review of Community Centres continue.**
- To agree the proposed scope and methodology as set out in the report.**
- To establish a Task and Finish Group, the membership of which would include 4 Councillors, the details of which were to be decided by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny**

## **Committee.**

### **13 STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL AND COMBINED AUTHORITIES: INFORMATION REPORT (S/19/7)**

The Committee received the report of the Democratic Services Officer which asked Members to consider and note the contents of the new guidance and identify any aspects which would merit further consideration in relation to scrutiny work at Selby.

Members were advised that on 7 May 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published the document, 'Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Overview and Scrutiny'. The new guidance sought to clarify the role and benefits of scrutiny to local authorities, taking into account the changes to scrutiny since the previous guidance was published in 2006.

Officers explained the guidance recognised that local authorities were best placed to decide how scrutiny should work within their own political structures. As such it was focussed towards highlighting best practice, with it left to individual councils to determine its implementation.

The Committee noted that Selby District Council had undertaken a review of its scrutiny arrangements in 2018; Scrutiny Committee would need to consider the guidance issued by the Government in the context of scrutiny at Selby, and if there were any specific sections of the new guidance it would like to highlight.

Members agreed that any comments on the guidance would be given at the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**To note the contents of the new guidance for further comment at the next meeting of the Committee.**

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm.