

North Yorkshire County Council
Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 16 January 2017 at 10.30 am.

Present:-

County Councillor Steve Shaw-Wright in the Chair.

County Councillors Val Arnold, John Blackburn, John Blackie (substitute for Andrew Goss), Sam Cross, Bryn Griffiths, Andrew Lee, Cliff Lunn, Bob Packham (substitute for Tony Randerson) and Tim Swales.

Also in Attendance

Officers: Daniel Harry - Scrutiny Team Leader, Fiona Sowerby - Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager, Julie Blaisdale Assistant Director - Library Customer and Community Services, Sarah Foley - Customer Programme Manager

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Derek Bastiman (Chairman), Andrew Goss (Vice-Chairman), and Tony Randerson.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

107. Election of Chairman for the meeting

Apologies had been received from the Chairman, Cllr Derek Bastiman, and the Vice Chairman, Cllr Andrew Goss. Cllr Val Arnold and Cllr Steve Shaw-Wright were nominated to act as the Chairman for the duration of the meeting. A vote was held and Cllr Steve Shaw-Wright won with 5 votes to Cllr Val Arnold's 4 votes.

108. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2016, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

109. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

110. Public Questions or Statements

There were no public questions or statements

111. Executive Member Update

There was no Executive Member update.

112. Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader inviting comments from Members on the content of the Committee's programme of work scheduled for future meetings.

Resolved -

That the content of the Work Programme report and schedule be agreed, subject to inclusion of the additional elements identified in discussions around following agenda items.

113. Insurance Tender and Insurance Claims Analysis Report

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager providing an overview of the outcome of the 2016 insurance re-procurement and an overview of the insurance claims expenditure over recent years.

Fiona Sowerby, Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager, outlined the procurement process that had been undertaken for the Council's insurances and noted that over £100,000 of savings had been achieved. Increases in Insurance Premium Tax, however, mean that much of these savings are unlikely to be realised.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths queried why the different insurances had not been placed with one insurer. In response, Fiona Sowerby explained that an insurance broker had been used to place the various insurances that the Council had with the most competitive insurer, to reduce overall premiums.

Fiona Sowerby noted that Public Liability claims often took a long time to resolve and also that they could be costly. As such, money was set aside each year to cover the estimated Public Liability claims exposure, based upon work undertaken by actuaries.

There followed a discussion about the Council's Public Liability exposure and how this was changing over time. In particular, the impact of reductions in the property portfolio linked to conversion of Local Authority Maintained schools to Academies. Committee members also questioned the risks associated with asbestos in properties currently managed by or previously managed by the Council.

In response, Fiona Sowerby stated that the liability belonged to the organisation that managed the property at the point in time to which the claim relates.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths highlighted the length of time it took for claims relating to asbestos to be made and queried how significant an issue this was for the Council.

Fiona Sowerby agreed to provide further information on long term Public Liability claims exposure, in particular relating to asbestosis.

Looking at the Motor Claims data provided in the report, committee members discussed possible causes of the increases in claims made against the Council. Fiona Sowerby stated that there was no single cause but a range of factors, ranging from a spate of theft of catalytic converters to driver error and carelessness. Members asked for further information on Motor Claims so they could better understand what preventative actions could be taken.

Cllr Steve Shaw-Wright noted that the table in Appendix C of the report, which provided details of closed claims, highlighted that the Council successfully defended claims. Fiona Sowerby stated that the Council's policy was to maintain a 'vigorous defence of any claim where it is thought that NYCC are not liable'.

Cllr John Blackie noted, from his experience of working with community transport, that the Risk and Insurance Team provided an excellent service and that they were effectively managing an important area of the Council's activity.

Resolved -

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That Fiona Sowerby be invited to attend the next Committee Mid Cycle Briefing at 10am on 27 February 2017 to provide a fuller explanation of the following:
 - A detailed breakdown of motor claims, including an overview of what measures are in place to reduce the number of motor claims
 - A breakdown of asbestosis claims, including an explanation how the Council's exposure is estimated.

114. 2020 Council - Customer - Update

Considered -

The presentation by Julie Blaisdale Assistant Director, Library Customer and Community Services, and Sarah Foley, Customer Programme Manager, on the development of digital self-service channels. Specifically, progress against the 2020 target of 70% of contact being managed by customers using digital self-service channels.

Sarah Foley introduced the presentation and highlighted that the approach taken to increasing digital self-service had been developed with customers and that the Customer Strategy had been widely consulted upon.

For each work stream the focus was upon the customer journey and balancing the need to promote self-service, with the associated financial savings, with the need to ensure a good customer experience and high levels of satisfaction.

Julie Blaisdale noted that libraries were key to the delivery of digital self-service as they enable access to public computers and also had volunteers and staff available to assist those people who are less familiar with computers. Courses are also being developed with Adult Learning to improve IT skills. The first step is to better understand what the level of need is and how best to meet that need.

Sarah Foley highlighted that data was being gathered and analysed to help understand how great a shift there had been from telephone and face to face contacts to digital self-service. It was noted that North Yorkshire was one of only a few local authorities that were able to do this, at present.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths questioned how many people ended their contact with the Council prematurely, hung up the telephone or switched off the computer, due to frustration with the time it took to resolve their issue. In response, Sarah Foley stated that such data was available and could be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

Cllr Cliff Lunn stated that the 70% target was sufficiently testing and that the Council was only one of a small number of local authorities to set a target.

Cllr Bob Packham questioned whether the County Council was working with other councils and public sector organisations in the county to set up a digital self-service platform for all services. It was noted that, in general, the public do not know which organisation delivers what service. A more joined up approach would provide opportunities for improving customer service and for further savings, through

economies of scale.

In response, Julie Blaisdale stated that this was an area of interest but that the current focus was upon the County Council's services and targeting those areas that offered the greatest scope to drive out savings. Julie Blaisdale also confirmed that there was an ongoing review of best practice and that a visit was planned to Leeds City Council to see whether there were any lessons that could be learned from the approach taken in a large unitary authority.

Cllr Tim Swales asked what work had been done with Parish Councils, bearing in mind that North Yorkshire was a three-tier county. Julie Baisdale noted that the Business and Environmental Services department had worked with Parish Councils over such issues as the reporting of pot-holes.

Cllr Bryn Griffiths requested an overview of the work streams in the programme and progress that was being made against key milestones. This would then help understand progress being made with the achievement of the 70% target.

There followed a discussion about the work that was in place to support those people who were not able to use digital media such as computers, tablets or mobile phones to contact the Council. Concerns were raised that investment in telephone access would decline over time as the work to promote digital self-service progressed.

Julie Blaisdale reassured Committee Members that face to face contacts and telephone contacts would still be available for those people who were unable to use digital self-service. It was noted that considerable investment had been made in the Customer Contact Centre and that this was a key element of the Customer Strategy.

Resolved -

- a) That the presentation be noted
- b) To support the principle of what the Customer programme is seeking to achieve but seek reassurance that measures will be kept in place to ensure that those people who are 'off line' are not excluded from accessing the Council on equal terms
- c) That Julie Blaisdale and Sarah Foley attend the meeting of the Committee at 10.30am on 19 June 2017 to provide:
 - An overview of the work streams in the programme and progress that was being made against key milestones
 - Details of the number of on-line and telephone enquiry 'hang ups'
 - A summary of what joint work is being taken across the public sector in North Yorkshire on channel shift
 - Details of the findings from the planned visit to Leeds City Council.

The meeting concluded at 12 noon.