

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 May 2018

**CORPORATE AND PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN**

Since my last statement to Council, the Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee formally met on 12 March 2018.

At that meeting, the committee heard from the National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company about the work that they do with adult offenders. The committee members were deeply concerned that local data on reoffending rates was not readily available and so the question of ‘how do reoffending rates in North Yorkshire compare to those in similar, neighbouring areas?’ could not be answered in any meaningful way. This appears to be a national, rather than local, issue with the Ministry of Justice either not gathering or not releasing the necessary data. I will be writing to the Ministry of Justice to raise this issue and seek an answer to the seemingly simple question that has been posed by the committee.

At the committee meeting on 12 March 2018, we also provided our response to the Ministry of Justice consultation on the proposed closure of the Magistrates Court in Northallerton. The committee was concerned about the impact that such a proposal will have upon the administration of and access to justice in the county, particularly for those people on low incomes and solely reliant on public transport. It was also the view of the committee that local justice is best served by magistrates who are local people with an understanding of local circumstances. For me, the key issue remains that promises that had been made that Northallerton Magistrates Court would be protected when Stokesley Magistrates Court was closed are now set to be broken.

On 16 April 2018, 5 members of the committee and I visited HMP Kirkclevington Grange. Members will be aware that this is a Category D (Open) prison near Yarm, which is designed to prepare prisoners who have served longer sentences for release. As such, the focus is upon skills, training and work. The visit was part of the ongoing scrutiny of criminal justice services, specifically the work being done to reduce reoffending rates by adult offenders in the county. Following on from this highly informative fact finding visit, the committee will be following up on: what services and support are in place for prisoners upon release from custody; what additional education and training funding could be identified and/or released to prisons that hold people from North Yorkshire; and whether more could be done in North Yorkshire to support the employment of prisoners released from custody, particularly those who have served long sentences.

At the Mid Cycle Briefing that was held on 23 April 2018, we continued our scrutiny of access to over the counter banking services in the county. At the January Mid Cycle Briefing we had heard from representatives of the banking industry and the processes that they went through when closing a bank branch. At our April meeting, we heard from the national Post Office organisation about the pressures upon the post office network. This enabled to members to test the assumption often being made when a bank branch closed that there was a post office nearby that could

provide many of the banking services. Whilst it was reassuring to hear that there is no plan to close any post offices, the fact remains that individual post offices do close for a range of reasons and then rarely re-open. The challenge is that commercial decisions are made that can have a far reaching impact upon some of the smaller and more rural communities in the county. The committee will debate these issues at their June meeting, with a view to determining what action can be taken.

At the next meeting of the committee on 18 June 2018 and in addition to the above, we will be scrutinising:

- The Police and Crime Commissioner's plans for greater collaboration between emergency services, irrespective of whether or not the proposed change in governance of the Fire and Rescue Service has been successful
- The first 12 months of operation of the community libraries in the county
- Progress being made with the development of traded services, with a particular focus upon the work of the Brierley Group.

Cllr Derek Bastiman

Chairman - Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

26 April 2018