

# Audit and Governance Committee

4 September 2024

## **Written representation received on 2 September 2024 from Cllr Warters**

I wish to comment in regard of the minutes of A&G on the 31<sup>st</sup> July and specifically paragraph 14 and to comments made at the meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> July.

In terms of the LGA Assurance Report just to be clear to new members that the actions that brought about the LGA report into the 2021 Public Interest Report were failings by senior management and Executive Members and just as I said at A&G in February 2023 it should not be for ordinary members to face an induction training programme very disruptive for those who work during the day for CYC to atone in the eyes of the LGA for the 2021 PIR.

Of course, training sessions required by law for members sat on committees with certain regulatory functions are necessary and can like all other sessions be done remotely.

The main reason I have decided to comment on these minutes was the reference to comments made by an A&G member around sanctions being strengthened for supposed breaches of the CYC Standards regime, I previously sent A&G members my thoughts around those comments and hope my concerns are understood.

On a wider point that A&G ought to be considering, correspondence to which I've also circulated, especially in the current financial situation of the council is whether or not given the close relationship between CYC, North Yorkshire Council and the Combined Authority is 'shared service arrangements'.

For example, the Combined Authority is currently advertising for a Monitoring Officer, do we really need three such officers? Could not the legal and governance functions be shared across the three authorities to produce significant efficiency savings?

One thing is certain, returning to the Standards issues that in a 'shared service' if councillors from North Yorkshire Council sat in judgement on Standards Committees looking into complaints made against CYC councillors and vice versa we might have a fairer more balanced system.

In a similar vein I was alerted to comments made by the same A&G member at your meeting of the 9<sup>th</sup> July in relation to use of private email addresses by councillors, to which I believe I am the only one so using.

Until relatively recently it was accepted practice for those that wanted to have a private email and telephone number entered on the council website, it has also been common practice for staff and councillors to operate CYC/private systems for communication largely because of distrust as to the confidentiality of the CYC system.

I knew and anecdotally it had long been held that senior staff and councillors could access the accounts of other councillors, I never thought that staff would confirm in writing they have that ability as they did in a Joint Standards Agenda this year and in writing to me.

As a committee looking into Governance matters, I really think you ought to take an interest in such matters and certainly request an input into a privacy protocol for councillor's email accounts, is it right that residents contacting members thinking they are contacting the member in confidence could have the communication intercepted?

Until such time as I am satisfied as to the privacy side of such matters, I will continue to use a private email address that has never been hacked.