
Meeting	Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee
Date	9 November 2020
Present	Councillors Crawshaw (Chair), Fenton (Vice-Chair), Hunter, Hollyer, Rowley, Musson, Pearson, Mason and Kilbane
Apologies	None

38. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, the Chair invited Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests the business on the agenda. None were declared.

39. Minutes

The Minutes of the last meetings of the Committee held on 5 October 2020 at 2pm and 5.30pm respectively were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair, subject to the following amendments:

2.00pm meeting: Minute 26 on Declarations of Interest: Councillor Rowley declared a personal and not prejudicial interest in his role as a school governor;

5.30pm meeting:: Minute 36 on Public Scrutiny Arrangements & Decision Making: Amend 'Members enquired about the possibility of meetings being conducted face to face' to 'A Member enquired etc....'

40. Public Participation

There was no public participation at this meeting.

41. Health Update On Covid-19

Members received a presentation from the Assistant Director of Public Health, giving the latest Covid statistical information, covering:

- Positive test results as York entered Tier 2 Restrictions;
- Care Home setting cases;

- University test results as a result of students returning from September;
- Schools setting in York on a week by week basis since September;
- Hospital activity, with number of inpatients testing positive at this time increasing slightly;
- Testing arrangements
- Contact tracing, including the local service launched

Together with plans to roll out new testing technology in the future

The Assistant Director then responded to questions from Members around data on infection rates in Further Educational settings, Intensive Care beds, the enforceability of track and trace, as well as excess deaths and the availability of further data to identify what proportion of York residents might still be struggling with Covid 19.

Finally, it was suggested that a 'dashboard' of 'key performance indicators (KPIs) around Covid 19 might be useful to develop and inform future discussion at meetings of the Committee in future. The Chair undertook to compile a list and provide that to the Assistant Director to assist in future reporting.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and statistical data be noted, with a view to incorporating, in future reporting, any further key performance areas set out by the Chair, as indicated above.

42. Update On Council's Overall Position Further To Covid-19 Including Outline Plans For The Coming Months

The Council's Chief Operating Officer was invited to the meeting to outline how the Council had been responding to the pandemic. He emphasised that, whilst York's rate currently remained the lowest of Yorkshire & Humber local authorities, complacency was to be avoided. He summarised the impact upon staff in terms of the additional work and their personal lives. New collaborative ways of working with partners across the city had emerged and would continue. He updated generally on the position of the York economy and the support available for businesses, including business grants. Lastly, he outlined the broad proposals of the senior management structure which would be presented to Staffing & Urgency Committee in December 2020.

The Chief Operating Officer then responded to a range of Member questions around the interim structural arrangements, his priorities for reassuring residents at this difficult time, what further steps the Council could take to inform businesses what support they could apply for and how, as well as recruitment processes for the new senior management structure.

RESOLVED: That the update from the Chief Operating Officer, be noted.

43. HR & Staff Well-Being Update

Members considered a report providing an update on key activities planned or taking place to support the health & wellbeing of staff during the pandemic and beyond. It was noted that the next health & wellbeing survey would be launched during November/December.

The Head of Human Resources responded to a range of questions from Members in relation to:

- the percentage of staff in Council buildings on average;
- indicators to identify any particular directorates struggling with stress;
- defining whether a stress related absence was work or personal related;
- improvements to take up with health & wellbeing surveys, on which it was noted that the Head of Human Resources would report back at a future meeting;
- information on the cumulative rise in sickness in Children's Services, with further details to be provided to the Chair;
- staff homeworking set up;
- progress against re-procuring the Day One Absence contract and alternative options, with the potential for future pre-decision scrutiny involvement

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and information received be noted;
- (2) future pre-decision scrutiny consideration be given to the re-procurement of and alternative available options available for the Day One Absence Management System;
- (3) the investigations and visits already undertaken by the Chair/Vice-Chair, in conjunction with the Head of Human Resources, to assess how other organisations addressed stress at work, be continued;

- (4) the Children's, Education & Communities Scrutiny Committee be asked to look into the circumstances surrounding the rise in staff stress absences within that Directorate;
- (5) this Committee review the results of the next staff survey on health & wellbeing when appropriate and further information be considered on measures introduced by other local authorities to support staff health & wellbeing.

44. Finance Update

Members considered a report, providing them with an update on current financial issues facing the Council. The next corporate monitoring report would be considered by the Executive on 26 November 2020, after which a more detailed report tailored for this Committee would be presented to it. Since the report had been published, a national lockdown had been announced and an extension to the furlough scheme had been announced, with tranche 4 of the Covid Support Grant being allocated, with an additional grant being provided to help Councils manage those who were extremely vulnerable at this time.

The Council's Section 151 Officer then responded to questioning on the report, in relation to:

- How other local authorities were planning ahead financially at this time;
- The isolation grant and whether it was sufficient. It being noted that the Financial Assistance Scheme could be used to top up, if necessary;
- Re-allocating monies to more needy areas if appropriate;
- rolling out a budgetary deficit over a period of years and how that might work in practice, taking into account whether the objective was to save money more immediately or manage the situation in a more sustainable way

RESOLVED: That the report and update be noted.

45. Scrutiny Management and Work Planning

Members considered a report outlining future work planning arrangements for the remainder of the Municipal Year and presenting a way in which business could be held in a central work planning document managed by this Committee, under the auspices of the Chair and Vice Chair between formal meetings.

The Chair gave details of commissioned scrutiny slots, where meetings had already been organised to look into specific allocated areas, such as the Council's Asset Management Review by this Committee on 23 November 2020. A commissioned meeting slot was also being considered for a Children's, Education & Communities Committee focusing on voluntary sector support.

The Chair concluded by emphasising that the new work planning arrangements were essentially a dialogue between all relevant parties, put in place to help manage scarce corporate resources to support and manage scrutiny activity at this time and development was ongoing.

RESOLVED: That the update and work in progress be noted.

46. Work Plan 2019/20

Further to Minute No 45 above relating to work planning, the Chair reported that the work plan for this Committee, as it currently stood, was contained within the information provided on that item. He undertook to liaise with other Scrutiny Committee Chairs prior to the next meeting to discuss up and coming business for their next public meetings.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Chair liaise with other Scrutiny Committee Chairs, as set out above, in relation to the business for forthcoming meetings; and
- (2) the work plan be updated for the next meeting, following further discussions with Executive Members and Senior Management.

Councillor J Crawshaw, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.00 pm].