

City of York Council	Committee Minutes
Meeting	Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	19 April 2022
Present	Councillors Fenton (Chair), Heaton, Hollyer, Vassie, Wells and Fitzpatrick (Substitute)
Apologies	Councillors Baker and Pavlovic

39. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest or other registerable interest they might have had in respect of business on this agenda, if they had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. None were declared.

40. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 18 January 2022 be approved and signed as an accurate record.

41. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Flick Williams spoke on agenda item 5 – Safer York Partnership bi-annual report regarding counterterrorism measures in the city. Ms Williams asked for a full risk assessment on terrorism to be conducted in the city, and argued that closing the streets to traffic and erecting barriers in order to prevent terrorism was not cost effective and conflicted with European Court of Human Rights standards for the right to life.

42. Q3 Finance and Performance Monitor

This report provided details of the 2021-22 third quarter monitoring position for both finance and performance across Housing & Community Safety. The paper incorporates data to December 2021, which was reported to Executive on 7 February 2022. The Head of Service Finance was in attendance to present the report and respond to questions.

Officers presented the main points of the report, and members began discussion of the item. Concerns were raised around the number of households with dependent children in temporary accommodation and officers stated that the numbers can fluctuate however there had been a general increase in recent months due to a trend in family breakdowns post-Covid, the reduction in Universal Credit and the cost of living crisis. Officers stated they would provide members with statistics on dependent children in temporary accommodation.

The increase in hate crimes was discussed by officers and members, who noted a steady annual increase in the statistic. Officers stated that hate crime data was monitored daily and the majority were isolated cases without patterns or links to others. Officers were working with Communities Team on a Hate Crime Action Plan which sought to increase public confidence in reporting. It was noted that the majority of incidents revolved around the night time economy, especially in fast food outlets and where alcohol was involved.

It was reported that training was ongoing to help staff to distinguish between hate crimes and incidents, however training with North Yorkshire County Council had been delayed during the Covid-19 pandemic due to the need for it to be held face to face. Officers committed to share the details of the Hate Crime Action Plan with members as soon as they were finalised.

Concerns were raised around the statistic showing that there had been no change in energy efficiency for York's housing over the last year. Officers commented that increasing energy efficiency was a large challenge, however they also suggested that the decision made in 2020/21 to retrofit some council housing in the city was not yet reflected in the figures. It was also noted that work on the retrofit programme had made available £5 million in grant funding from HM Government. Officers referred to the ongoing work of the Zero Carbon Strategy and recognised the need to improve in all areas continually.

Members commented on opportunities in future to work with pension funds in decarbonising housing stock. Officers stated that this was ever more feasible with rising fuel costs and outlined that an improvement of the energy efficiency rating from D to C resulted in a £500 yearly saving for the average house.

On homeless families, officers noted that the council was committed to a joined-up approach across teams and organisations to for example prevent children needing to move schools. It was observed that rent arrears were rising markedly, and that many residents were facing a heat or eat

question. Communications around fuel poverty from the Council included the regular tenant newsletter which provided residents with signposting and information on the issue.

Resolved:

- i. That the financial and performance management position across Housing & Community Safety be noted.

Reason: To ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget and performance is effectively scrutinised.

43. Safer York Partnership bi-annual report

This report provided the end of year performance report for Safer York Partnership. The report also covered the refreshed priorities within the Safer York Partnership Community Safety Strategy for 2022 and discussed a proposed review of Safer York Partnership alongside the production of a new three year strategy for the period 2023- 2026. The Head of Community Safety was in attendance to present the report and respond to questions.

Officers presented the report which highlighted the current priorities of the Safer York Partnership. It was reported that a City Centre Multi-Agency Roadmap to Recovery Group had been established to monitor and combat crime and anti-social behaviour in central York. The group had since been stood down following the lifting of restrictions. A consultation was underway on the re-imposition of a public space protection order to empower police to seize alcohol in situations of anti-social behaviour. Officers noted that York held Purple Flag status as a safe city but acknowledged that it was important not to be complacent.

The Counter-Terrorism Task Group was discussed, which met quarterly. Key points raised were the new protect duty which was to come in force in 2023, the level of risk in publically accessible location and learning from the Manchester Arena attack of 2017. It was noted that the task group was undertaking risk assessment in York on a constant basis in line with the national threat level. Officers explained that counter-terrorism measures in place in York were installed on the advice of the unit, with a focus on hostile vehicle threat mitigation. It was explained that such measures were needed to prevent York from becoming a logical target since similar defences had been installed in nearby cities.

There were regular meeting on anti-social behaviour with police and other neighbourhood groups and a new problem solving model had been introduced based on the SARA model. Work was also underway with

Superintendent Mark Khan of North Yorkshire Police on a strategy for violence against women and girls.

Members expressed support for ward city centre ward councillors inclusion in Safer York Partnership meetings, but some expressed concern at the potential seizure of addictive substances. Officers clarified that although other cities having physical defences installed were a factor in York's risk of an attack, that was not the reason for installation. Officers cited the attacks on Christmas markets in various cities since 2017 as a particular threat to York, especially due to the city's large footfall. It was emphasised that permanent physical anti-terrorism measures were part of a larger plan and that they were confident they were proportional to the threat posed.

Members enquired about the possibility of installing CCTV in the Shambles Market at the suggestion of a local women's group and officers reported that a successful bid had been made to the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the next round of funding would be focusing on increasing CCTV.

Resolved:

- i. That the information relating to delivery in 2021/22 of the Community Safety Refresh 2021 be noted.
- ii. That comments of the committee on the proposed additions to the Community Strategy Refresh 2022 be noted.
- iii. That the views of the committee in relation to the potential strategic priorities for the Community Safety Strategy 2023-26 be noted.

Reason: To update members on the performance of the Safer York Partnership and facilitate contribution to development of future strategy.

44. Update on the implementation of a replacement for North Yorkshire HomeChoice

Members were provided with a document which provided context and information on the transition from North Yorkshire Home Choice to Open Housing allocations system, which was expanded upon by officers in the meeting. The Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration and the Head of Housing Management were attendance to present the report and respond to questions.

Officers summarised the document, explained that City of York Council was part of a wider choice based letting system, North Yorkshire Home Choice, whose partners could be seen on their website. It was reported that

Executive had made the decision to pull out in order to gain the ability to make changes locally. It was anticipated that any changes would most affect those in the bronze band.

Members discussed Spark York, the site of which had been earmarked for social housing, and raised concerns that planned social housing was not always designated 'affordable'.

Officers reported that applicants had been advised and kept informed on the transition through extensive communications. Four letters had been sent to each applicant reminding that they needed to reregister and communications had been constant with partners throughout. Comparisons of applicant lists had shown that most who were registered with North Yorkshire Home Choice had applied to Open Housing.

Officers commented that those on the bronze band were least likely to gain access to housing through City of York Council, however if people have a valid reason for missing the deadline for applying to Open Housing, the application would be backdated.

Members agreed to discuss the issue again in a future meeting and thanked staff for their work.

Resolved:

- i. That the contents of the update be noted.

Reason: To keep the committee informed on the transition.

45. Resettlement Pathway review

Members were provided with a document which provided context and information on the review of resettlement pathway and related services and support, which was expanded upon by officers in the meeting. The Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration and the Head of Housing Management were attendance to present the report and respond to questions.

Officers discussed the procurement of an adult services contract focusing on the resettlement pathways which support mainly single people who are homeless or at risk of rough sleeping as well as young people as an alternative to care.

A refresh of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was due in 2023, which this work was part of. Meetings on the resettlement pathways has been attended by up to 60 people. Officers had examined data of 323 people in the pathway and arranged hundreds of interviews to be conducted by local charities.

Overall York rough sleeping numbers were very low, but officers were looking to rapidly rehouse those who were homeless and ensure the problem is kept in check.

Officers discussed the emerging themes before asking members for questions, who spoke about young people, such children not in education, employment or training who are likely to fall through the net.

Young people's mental health issues were also discussed, especially around the challenges of a multi-agency approach which often ended in young people not feeling listened to since they had to repeat their story multiple times. Officers stated this was a challenge that they were determined to rise to, and spoke of a strength-based approach which would reduce bureaucracy and create more personal relationships with those who need help in order to break down barriers of sharing and build more confident relationships across organisations. They emphasised that the resettlement pathways and mental health were tightly interlinked.

Resolved:

- i. That the contents of the update be noted.

Reason: To ensure that the committee is updated on the resettlement pathways review.

46. Work Plan

The Chair reported that since there were no more meeting of the committee in the municipal year, the work plan for the 2022/23 year would be discussed at an informal meeting in June.

Resolved:

- i. That the work plan be noted.

Reason: To ensure the committee has a work plan for 2021/22.

Cllr S Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.34 pm and finished at 7.55 pm].