

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at Member's Lounge, Ryedale House, Malton
on Thursday 10 December 2009

Present

Councillors Andrews, Clark, Cussons (Vice-Chair), Raper, Mrs Shields (Chairman),
Mrs Wilford and Windress

In Attendance

Audrey Adnitt, Paul Cresswell, Jos Holmes, James Ingham, Louise Sandall and Clare Slater

Minutes

41 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cottam and Jackson.

42 Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 October 2009

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 15 October 2009 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Resolved

That the minutes of a meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 15 October 2009 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Chair reported that as the Licensing Committee was a Quasi Judicial Committee it was not appropriate for the minutes to be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

43 Urgent Business

The Chairman reported that there were no items to be dealt with at the meeting as a matter of urgency by virtue of Section 100(B)(4)(b).

Councillor Clark asked for clarification on the current voluntary redundancy policy which had been activated as part of the 1/11 initiative. Following a discussion it was:

Resolved

That the matter be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for clarification on the following points:

- What has activated the redundancy policy and why.
- Who made the decision for 1/11 and why.
- What were the timescales.

44 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Mrs Wilford declared a personal interest in item 7 “Repairs to Former Town Hall, Malton” as she was the District Council representative on the Malton Museum Committee.

45 **Safer Ryedale Partnership Review**

The Head of Economy and Housing submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to provide a context for the Safer Ryedale Partnership Review.

Members were reminded that following the recommendation from the Constitution Review Working Party, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been designated the Council’s crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committee, and as part of this work the Committee were requested to review the Safer Ryedale Partnership and also consider what scrutiny of crime and disorder they would like to undertake at future meetings.

A copy of the Safer Ryedale Partnership Plan 2008-2011 was appended to the report along with the Memorandum of Understanding and Co-operation. The Partnership had been formed in 1998 as a result of the Crime & Disorder Act, it was a statutory body comprising partner organisations with the duty placed on them to work together to reduce crime and disorder and associated issues. The Statutory Partner agencies were:

- Ryedale District Council
- North Yorkshire County Council
- North Yorkshire Police
- North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
- North Yorkshire Police Authority
- York and North Yorkshire Primary Care Trust
- National Parks Authority

The Corporate Director chaired the Board and Membership was outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding and Co-operation. The Board approved the Strategy and Action Plan, reviewed performance information and was currently involved in the preparation of the Joint Strategic Information Assessment. Councillors Hope and Maud represented the Council on the Board.

The delivery team was chaired by the Economy and Community Manager, and the team met quarterly to review progress against the Action Plan, approve bids for funding and prepare papers for the Board.

The Council currently expended £70,930 on community safety activity, largely on the Community Safety Manager post. In addition the Partnership had two part time officers, funded through Government Office and partner grant aid.

The Partnership managed funding of £113,000 in 2009/10 to pursue its priorities. This funding was likely to be reduced considerably in 2010/11 as funding was allocated according to crime levels. The Partnership had agreed to investigate closer working and a possible merger with the Ryedale Local Strategic Partnership. This had been prompted in part by the retirement of the Council's Community Safety Manager and should this proposal proceed it was not intended to replace this post.

The Economy and Community Manager provided a further update on events since the publication of the agenda, the Ryedale Strategic Partnership had met, and as a result both the Safer Ryedale Board and Ryedale Strategic Partnership had agreed to proceed with the merger. Further work was now to be carried out, and a report was to be brought to the January meeting of the Community Services Committee on the potential merger.

The Chair advised that in relation to the new role of the Committee as the Council's designated crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committee, it would be beneficial to invite Inspector Hutchinson to a future meeting.

Resolved

- That the report be noted.
- That Inspector Hutchison be invited to the next meeting of the Committee.
- That Inspector Hutchison be consulted on the requirements and frequency of meetings in relation to the work required by the crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committee, preferably before the next meeting.

46 Sickness Absence

The Head of Organisational Development submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to provide an update.

As part of the Committee's Sickness Absence Review, a presentation had been given by representatives from North Yorkshire County Council, on their

Sickness Absence Policy at the August meeting. Following the presentation Unison had been asked to comment on the policy and the following key points:

- A new pay structure which removed spot salaries and provided incremental progression within a pay band for the vast majority of staff;
- A job evaluation scheme;
- The introduction of 'thank you' payments of up to £50 for good service;
- Attendance awards for staff with nil absence in the past 12 month;
- A scheme to provide up to 200 cars for frontline relatively low paid staff who need a car to undertake their duties, for example in the area of home care;
- The removal of essential car user allowance from 2,000 staff and the introduction of a flat mileage rate for all staff;
- The removal of the car leasing scheme for essential users;
- The increase of flexi leave by two days per year;
- The introduction of additional increments for exceptional performance
- Long service awards given at earlier stages;
- A new employee benefits scheme providing access to a large range of discounts;
- The awarding of annual increments within a pay band based upon satisfactory performance, which covered conduct, capability, good appraisal and an acceptable level of attendance.

The full and detailed response from the Secretary of the Unison Ryedale Branch was provided in the report, in essence Unison were fundamentally opposed linking incremental progression to sickness absence, and the response also covered the other key points in North Yorkshire County Council's policy.

Members were advised that Selby District Council, had been identified as a comparative authority, with a good performance record in relation to sickness absence, and a members of their Senior Management Team was willing to come and discuss their approach.

Following a discussion it was

Resolved

- a. That the report be received
- b. That a task group comprising Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meet with Unison to consider improvements to the current sickness absence policy.
- c. That a representative from Selby District Council be invited to come to a future meeting to discuss their sickness absence policy.

The Corporate Director (s151) submitted a report (previously circulated) following a request made at the last meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, to provide an update on the current position regarding the repairs to the roof and stonework at the former Town Hall, Malton.

The report gave details of the repairs needed, along with the reasons for the delay, details of when the work was to take place and the financial impacts.

The report was discussed in detail, and some Members were of the opinion that further details were required, however following further debate it was:

Resolved

That the report be received and its contents noted as recommended.

NB. Councillors Andrews and Clark requested that their votes against the recommendation be recorded.

48 Joint Member Workshop Feedback (Information Item)

A report (previously circulated) from the Joint District/County Council Scrutiny Member's Workshop held on the 10 November 2009 at County Hall, Northallerton, was presented for Members' information.

49 Current Scrutiny Review List

A list (previously circulated) of the scrutiny reviews currently being undertaken, by the Overview & Scrutiny Committees at the seven other local authorities in North Yorkshire were presented for Member's information.

50 Annual Review of the Risk Management Strategy

The Audit Manager submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to present the revised Risk Management Strategy 2007- 2010 to Members for consideration and approval.

The Risk Management Strategy was last approved by Members in December 2008.

The primary objectives of the strategy were to: -

- Further develop risk management and raise its profile across the Council.
- Integrate risk management into the organisational culture service planning and performance aspects of the organisation.
- Further embed risk management through the ownership and management of risk as part of all decision making processes, both at officer and member level.
- Manage risk in accordance with best practice.
- Create effective processes that will allow the Council to produce risk management assurance statements annually.

The proposed revisions to the Risk Management Strategy were appended to report at annex A.

Councillor Clark advised that he would like to have more involvement in the coming year as part of his role as Risk Champion.

Resolved

That the report be received and the revised Risk Management Strategy be approved.

51 **Internal Audit Quarter 2 Report**

The Corporate Director (s151) submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to present the Interim Internal Audit Report for the period ending 30 November 2009.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations required all Councils to annually review their systems of internal control and to provide an adequate and effective Internal Audit function, and the Interim Internal Audit Report from the North Yorkshire Audit Partnership was attached at annex A.

The report highlighted issues that the audits had identified and provided a summary of them. It also outlined any issues emerging from the audits of the principal financial systems of the Council, together with any significant comments from other audits completed in the year to date.

The Audit Partnership provided the Council in its report with a clear statement of assurance reflecting its opinion of the Internal Control Framework. This was based upon the audits completed complemented by its existing knowledge and understanding of the control framework.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

52 **Service Risk Register - Transformation**

The Head of Transformation submitted a copy of the Service Risk Register for the Transformation Team printed from the covalent system as at the 20 November 2009.

Resolved

That the report be received.

53 **Any other business that the Chairman decides is urgent.**

The Chair advised that in conversation with other Members of the Committee, she was of the opinion that it would be beneficial to change the starting time for meetings of this Committee from 6.30pm to 6pm with effect from the beginning of the next municipal year. This matter was to be referred to Council for further consideration.

Decisions from Other Committees

Lists of Decisions from the following Committees were submitted:

- Community Services – 26 November 2009
- Policy and Resources – 3 December 2009

Exempt Information

Resolved

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item as there will be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as the information relates to any individual.

Mrs Wilford advised that she had attended the Policy & Resources Committee on the 3 December 2009 as an Overview and Scrutiny observer, and wished to raise concern in relation to an exempt item on the agenda. Although the item was to be taken under "Exempt" five members of staff had remained in the public gallery. A discussion followed and Members were of the opinion that this was an area of protocol, which needed to be reviewed.

Councillor Andrews also requested some addition information in relation to the

Northgate Contract, which had been debated at the Policy and Resources Committee, and received some further details from the Corporate Director (s151).

Resolved

That the Corporate Director (s151) in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer establish a protocol for Officers in exempt meetings.