



SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21st February 2023

(Meeting to follow the Select (Crime and Disorder) Committee meeting)

Meeting to be held at Belle Vue Square Offices, Belle Vue Suite, Skipton

Committee Members: The Chair (Councillor Staveley) and Councillors Brown, Harbron, Hull, Ireton, Jaquin, Lis, Mercer, Pighills, Shuttleworth, Solloway and Whitaker.

Please note the following advice in advance of the meeting:

Whilst there is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering or continue to social distance, please be considerate towards the wellbeing of others.

Anyone showing Covid symptoms or feeling unwell, are asked not to attend and in-person meeting, this is in the interest of general infection control. Further guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence** – To receive any apologies for absence.
2. **Minutes** – To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023.
3. **Public Participation** – In the event that questions are received, the Chair will conduct the public participation session for a period of up to fifteen minutes. Where questions are asked, one related supplementary question may be permitted at the Chairman's discretion.
4. **Declarations of Interest** – All Members are invited to declare at this point any interests they have on items appearing on this agenda, including the nature of those interests and whether they wish to apply the exception below.

Note: Declarations should be in the form of either:

- a **“disclosable pecuniary interest”** under Appendix A to the Code of Conduct, in which case the Member must leave the meeting room; or
- an **“other interest”** under Appendix B of the Code. For these interests, the Member may stay in the meeting room, although they must leave if membership of the organisation results in a conflict of interest.

Exception: Where a member of the public has a right to speak at a meeting, a Member who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or an other interest and must leave the room, has the same rights and may make representations, answer questions or give evidence, but at the conclusion of that, must then leave the room and not take part in the discussion or vote.

5. Select Committee Working Group: Working Arrangements of Skipton Magistrates Court – Draft Report – Report of the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager. Attached.

Purpose of Report – To approve the draft Select Committee Working Group: Working Arrangements of Skipton Magistrates Court Report.

6. Any Other Items which the Chair decides are urgent in accordance with Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting –

Wednesday, 15 March 2023 at 6.30pm – Select Committee.

Agenda Contact Officer:

David Smith,
Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
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13th February 2023

AGENDA ITEM 2

SELECT COMMITTEE

18 January 2023

Present – The Chair (Councillor Staveley) and Councillors Brown, Jaquin, Pighills, Shuttleworth and Solloway.

Officers – Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager and Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer.

Start: 6.34pm

Finish: 7:18pm

Apologies for Absence –

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ireton, Lis, Mercer and Whitaker.

Confirmation of Minutes –

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2022 are signed and approved as a correct record.

Public Participation –

There was no public participation.

Declarations of Interest –

Councillor Jaquin declared that he was a Council appointee on the Yorkshire Housing Group at the time of the meeting.

Councillor Brown declared that he has a relative who works for Yorkshire Housing.

Minutes for Report

OS.487 **Select Committee Working Group: Housing Standards in the Craven District – Terms of Reference**

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager submitted a report asking Members to approve the Terms of Reference for the Select Committee Working Group on Housing in the Craven District.

Members discussed how the Working Group was a ‘big ask’ for the time that Craven District Council had remaining. They were informed that any incomplete work would be handed across to the North Yorkshire Council Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

There was discussion regarding the exact wording of the Terms of Reference, and the following changes were made:

- 1) At 2.2, ‘... regarding how damp and mould hazards are reported by tenants...’ was changed to ‘... regarding how maintenance, upgrading and repair issues, for example damp and mould hazards, are reported by tenants...’.
- 2) ‘For Elected Members, stakeholders and residents to receive reassurance of robust lines of communication between themselves and Housing Providers when dealing with enquiries.’ to be added at 3.2.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Members also raised the following:

- That CDC Officers should be invited to speak to the Working Group.
- That a questionnaire should be sent to all housing providers in the Craven District and that they should also be invited to speak to the Working Group. The wording of the questionnaire would be decided in a Working Group meeting.
- That, it is important that housing providers are monitored on the standard of housing that they are providing.
- That, some housing providers are better at communicating with their tenants than others.

Resolved – That the Terms of Reference for the Select Committee Working Group on Housing Standards in the Craven District are approved, subject to the following amendments:

- 1) At 2.2, ‘... regarding how damp and mould hazards are reported by tenants...’ was changed to ‘... regarding how maintenance, upgrading and repair issues, for example damp and mould hazards, are reported by tenants...’.
- 2) ‘For Elected Members, stakeholders and residents to receive reassurance of robust lines of communication between themselves and Housing Providers when dealing with enquiries.’ to be added at 3.2.

OS.488

Any Other Business

Members hoped that another Select (Crime and Disorder) Committee meeting could be organised before 1 April 2023, after the one due to take place on 18 January 2023 was cancelled because of illness. They raised concerns about where the Crime and Disorder meetings would fit under the new council, highlighting that it is a statutory function and therefore the work must be adopted.

OS.489

Date and Time of Next Meeting

Select Committee Working Group: Magistrates Court - Wednesday, 25 January 2023 at 6.30pm (Virtual).

Select Committee Working Group: Housing Standards in the Craven District – Wednesday, 1 February 2023 at 6.30pm (Virtual).

Select Committee – Wednesday, 15 February 2023 at 6.30pm.

Chairman.



**Review of the Working Arrangements of Skipton
Magistrates Court**

Report of the Select Committee Working Group

Report to Select Committee on 21st February 2023

Councillor Andrew Solloway,
Chair of the Select Committee Working Group

1.0 The Introduction and Background

- 1.1 At the Select Committee meeting of 8th June 2022, Members discussed the work programme for the 2022/23 municipal year. They raised their concerns regarding the working arrangements of Skipton Magistrates Court as it had been brought to their attention that residents were often required to attend courts which were outside of the district. Members wanted to understand why this was happening, rather than the cases being heard at Skipton Magistrates Court.
- 1.2 At the Select Committee meeting of 20th October 2022, the terms of reference for this Working Group were agreed and the scope of the review was laid out. The purpose of the Working Group was to gain a better understanding of the working arrangements at Skipton Law Courts and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
- The current working arrangements of Skipton Magistrates Court.
 - Whether justice in the criminal and quasi-judicial licensing courts is being served locally.
 - How the Working Group can influence the current working arrangements at Skipton Law Courts if required.
 - To make recommendations to ensure that justice is being fairly heard in Craven, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and will remain this way in the future.
- 1.3 The review was conducted over 3 sessions which took place between September 2022 and February 2023. Members received both written and verbal evidence from HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), Skipton County and Family Court, the Bench Chair for North Yorkshire, North Yorkshire Police, Craven District Council Officers, and law firms from the local area. The Select Committee would like to thank all those that participated in this review.
- 1.4 This report summarises the review and outlines the Working Group's recommendation.

2.0 The Review

- 2.1 On 22nd September 2022, the Working Group held a fact-finding meeting to help establish the situation. Prior to the meeting, HMCTS, Skipton County and Family Courts, the Bench Chair for North Yorkshire, Craven District Council Officers and local law firms were contacted and asked to comment on the current operations of Skipton Magistrates Court. Written comments were received from all the aforementioned and one local law firm attended the meeting to give their verbal clarification of the situation. Members raised a number of concerns including the environmental and financial impact of people having to travel for justice. It was felt that cases were not being heard in Skipton as part of a cost-cutting exercise, but Members stressed that justice should not ultimately be decided by finances.
- 2.2 After the meeting on 22nd September 2022, Members had further questions for HMCTS and Skipton County and Family Law Courts. Members also wanted to gauge the views of North Yorkshire Police on whether travelling out of the district affected their service. On 16th November 2022, the Working Group held a meeting to review the additional evidence provided by HMCTS and Skipton County and Family Courts, and to hear from North Yorkshire Police. Members were particularly concerned that police officer time is spent travelling to courts outside of the district and that, on occasions, defendants had to travel with officers to court because they were unable to make their own way there. It was suggested that the working arrangements at Skipton Magistrates Court could be the subject of an ongoing review by the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee.
- 2.3 On 25th January 2023, the Working Group held its final meeting where further written evidence from HMCTS was reviewed. In the letter received from HMCTS, it was said that the number of cases heard at Skipton Magistrates Court was due to double in April 2023. Members were content that they had carried out an extensive review and agreed that North Yorkshire Council should review the situation in the future. Members wish a biannual progress report of the working arrangements of Skipton Magistrates Court be provided to the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee as an integral part of their Crime and Disorder remit. They would also like it to be a standing agenda item on future committee meetings that focus on crime and disorder.
- 2.4 These meetings, and all those that provided information, helped Members to understand the situation so that the following recommendation could be made.

3.0 The Recommendation

- 3.1 As this Select Committee will no longer exist from 1st April 2023, Members will not be able to review if HMCTS do increase the number of cases heard in Skipton as explained in their correspondence to the Working Group.

Therefore, Members strongly recommend that biannual reviews of the working arrangements of Skipton Magistrates Court (including the number of cases heard) are presented to the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee so that the situation can be monitored. If improvements are not evidenced, the Working Group strongly recommends that further reviews are carried out to understand the reasons behind this.

4.0 Monitoring Arrangements

- 4.1 It is proposed that this should be monitored by the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee of North Yorkshire Council.
- 4.2 The decision-makers to whom the recommendation affects will be asked to submit a response.

5.0 Items Submitted / Considered

- 5.1 HMCTS, 2010 – Proposal on the provision of court services in North and West Yorkshire.
- 5.2 HMCTS, 2014 – A Consultation on the merger of the Local Justice Areas in North Yorkshire.

6.0 Dates of Meetings

- 6.1 The following meetings took place:
- 8 June 2022 Select Committee meeting - Review of the Working Arrangements of Skipton Magistrates Court put onto the 2022/23 work programme.
 - 22 September 2022 Working Group fact-finding meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 5

- 20 October 2022 Select Committee meeting – Working Group Terms of Reference approved.
- 16 November 2022 Working Group meeting.
- 25 January 2022 Working Group meeting.

6.2 The following Officers attended the meetings of the Select Committee Working Group on the working arrangements of Skipton Magistrates Court:

- Alice Fox, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager.
- David Smith, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer.

DRAFT