GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2018
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 5.46 PM)

PRESENT: Councillors Steven Jackson in the Chair. Councillors Nick Brown, Richard Cooper, Pauline McHardy, Samantha Mearns, Alex Raubitschek, Matt Scott, and Christine Willoughby.

Late Arrivals: None.

Early Departures: None.

25/18 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES:
An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Norman Waller. Notification had been received that Councillor Richard Cooper was to act as substitute for Councillor Margaret Atkinson.

(5.32 pm)

26/18 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

(5.32 pm)

27/18 – MINUTES: The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2018 were presented to the Committee for approval.

Councillor McHardy raised an amendment to include her apologies for the meeting held on 13 September and the following text was subsequently added to the Minutes:

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Pauline McHardy.

The Minutes as amended were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Seven Members voted for the motion and there was one abstention)

(5.33 pm)

28/18 – EXEMPT INFORMATION: There was no exempt information.

(5.33 pm)

29/18 – PUBLIC QUESTIONS: The following question was read out by Mr Peter Lilley in accordance with Standing Order 27:

Members of the public are required to submit Public Questions at least 48 hours in advance of a meeting. There must be a reason for this. Therefore, can Councillor
Jackson please explain what he understands to be the purpose of Public Questions; and exactly how the procedure works; from the moment a resident submits their question to the answer being read out by the cabinet member or committee chairman?

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Steven Jackson, responded as follows:

My thanks for the question, which I will answer in two parts:

Firstly, my understanding of the purpose of public questions is based on the Principles of Public Life, as stated in our Council’s constitution and in particular, the principle of openness. Openness, in this context, is defined as “Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.” However, this principle does also state that information can be restricted when the wider public interest demands, which to me means that should a question relate to legally or commercially sensitive information then answers to Public Questions cannot risk compromising this material.

To answer the second portion of your question, regarding the way the public questions procedure works, I would refer you to the Constitution, in particular Part 4, Standing Order 27 entitled ‘Public Arrangements – Questions’, which lays out the procedure step by step.

Finally, in the interest of openness, and given your interest in the matter, I can confirm that I did write this response myself and I do stand by the contents of it.

My thanks for the question.

(5.33 pm – 5.35 pm)

MATTER REFERRED TO COUNCIL FOR CONSIDERATION

30/18 – SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2019/20: The Head of Legal and Governance submitted a written report, attached to which at Appendix A was the draft schedule of meetings from May 2019 to May 2020. As usual and wherever possible, meetings of the North Yorkshire County Council were taken into account to avoid clashes, as were other significant events such as party political conferences and, locally, the Great Yorkshire Show and the UCI Road World Championships. Group Leaders and Chief Officers had been consulted on the draft schedule.

RECOMMENDED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That the draft schedule of meetings 2019/20, as detailed in Appendix A, be approved.

(5.35 pm – 5.36 pm)