

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21st February 2007

CORPORATE AFFAIRS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Corporate Affairs Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met once since the last full Council meeting. The following items were considered:

Committee Meeting – 15 January 2007

Overview Reports

1. Sustainable Procurement

In late 2006 the Environment & Heritage; Corporate Affairs; and Economic Development and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committees resolved to undertake a scrutiny examination of how the Council's procurement links to and supports the achievement of its Sustainable Development Policy objectives. The Committees established a task and finish Member Research Group, the ProSus Group, to investigate the subject and report back to them.

The Committee was pleased to receive the final report of the ProSus Group and after much deliberation supported the group's recommendations with exception to recommendation 5.

***Recommendation 5:** A fund be established of a minimum of £100,000 to support sustainable procurement.*

The Committee did not support recommendation 5 (above) but suggested *'that the Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services evaluates the introduction of an application mechanism to operate a Fund that supports the Council's Sustainable Development Policy Objectives which does not rely solely upon subsidising procurement projects.'*

It was also agreed that an annual report would be presented to the Corporate Affairs O & SC from the Corporate Procurement Members' Working Group (CPMWG). This report should include the extent to which major (as determined by the Committee) procurements in the previous year have supported Sustainable Development objectives; and major procurements to be undertaken in the following year. (The Chairmen of the Environment & Heritage and Economic Development & Regeneration O & SC will be invited to the meeting when this report is considered.)

2. Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The Head of Corporate Policy gave a presentation to the Committee on the structure and operation of the LAA. He described in detail the proposed governance arrangements and the decision making process for the allocation of funding. He emphasised that the LAA does not have a separate legal entity and that therefore the success of the governance arrangements was based upon good will and common purpose. The Committee was reassured that the development of governance arrangements was in hand.

3. Scrutiny and Partnerships

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance highlighted the significance of proposals to strengthen the powers of scrutiny in respect of partner

organisations in "Strong and Prosperous Communities" the Local Government White Paper published on 26 October 2006. We were advised that scrutiny models for partnerships were being developed nationally together with further guidance and a methodology to be applied to community calls for action. It is anticipated that the proposals contained in the White Paper would come into effect in April 2008.

The Committee looks forward to the strengthened role that Scrutiny will have in relation to partnerships.

Members were also updated on the current position in relation to the development of a formalised partnership working governance arrangements and procedures for the County Council. The Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services assured us that the governance arrangements for the Local Area Agreement and the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership were sound and were based on an agreed corporate template.

We suggested that future work in this area should also include the risk of personal liability by Members nominated to outside bodies.

4. Corporate Performance Assessments

The Committee received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance that summarised the outcome of the Corporate Assessment, which had been carried out from 4 to 15 September 2006. The report also outlined an improvement plan. Members suggested two slight amendments to the plan:

- 3(c) the requirement for project management training to be strengthened.
- 3(d) meetings of MUGIT (Members User Group for IT) to be included.

5. Asset Management

The Committee received two reports from the Corporate Asset Manager:

a) Developing and implementing the asset management planning framework.

Members noted and agreed the new reporting framework for the Committee on asset management matters. We were assured that the overall reduction in the number of Key Performance Indicators would not affect the continuity of the data collected to date.

b) The role of Members in the property acquisition and redeployment processes.

In our constituency role we were assured that the notification arrangements ensure that all Members are aware of any transactions, either proposed or taking place, within their electoral division. The Committee agreed it is important that we are equipped with sufficient information to enable us to either answer queries from our constituents or have details of the appropriate officer within the County Council who can provide further information. The arrangements also allow us an opportunity to comment on proposed decisions using our local knowledge.

Progress and Performance Monitoring Reports

6. Corporate Health and Safety

Members welcomed the report of the Head of Health and Safety Risk Management. The report reviewed performance in terms of Health and Safety Management during the first half of 2006/07 and identified future actions. We look forward to receiving further reports in the future when comparative data will be available.

7. In-depth scrutiny review

The Committee agreed the focus of its in-depth reviews for 2007:

Feb – May 2007 The use of agency staff, within NYCC.

The County Council has some 23,000 staff and uses large numbers of relief and agency staff across a range of areas. These areas vary from the need for specialist staff, for example public sector accountants, which are sourced from specialists agencies, to more generic staff such as administrative and clerical staff, and those working in care. The greatest use in terms of costs and hours used relates to the main group of administrative, clerical and care staff.

This Committee feels that an in-depth scrutiny review undertaken at this time will provide valuable information to the County Council on an issue that has potential budget impact. It will also prove timely, both in relation to the wider transformation agenda and with particular relevance to the people strategy and workforce plan,

This review will seek to evaluate the use of agency and relief staff and look into alternative ways to meet the County Council's workload peaks and staffing troughs.

June – December 2007 Career development and succession planning,

The demographic profile of the County Council is of concern across many occupational groups and is of particular concern in terms of management at all levels. A significant proportion of County Council managers will retire within the next 10 years. The County Council does not have a clear succession planning approach to management posts except in some limited areas relies on external recruitment and in reality ad hoc internal promotions. There is no clear process for progressing staff with identified talent into management posts.

The Committee has previously identified this as an area requiring further scrutiny within its 'Recruiting young people' task group. We expect that work on this review will commence on completion of the 'Use of agency staff' review.

**County Councillor Margaret-Ann de Courcey-Bayley
Chairman – Corporate Affairs Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

February 2007