

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 May 2007

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The main areas of the Committee's work that I would like to highlight are set out below.

Scrutiny Project: Supporting the Rural Economy and Diversification in Agriculture

1. The Committee's work is progressing well. Since my last report to County Council I chaired a meeting with a group of farmers just outside Stokesley on the evening of 22 February 2007 when they highlighted some of the difficulties which they face when considering diversification opportunities. Perhaps, not surprisingly, Planning was raised but we also touched on issues such as co-operatives, environmental issues, Education and the County Councils' procurement policies.
2. On 2 March we visited Lancashire Rural Futures (LRF) in Clitheroe. As well as receiving a presentation on the various agri-environmental schemes which LRF has supported Members visited a number of developments in the Clitheroe area which highlighted the potential to make use of redundant farm buildings. We visited Bashall Farm development, a wonderful facility, incorporating a shop selling gifts and local produce, tea rooms and a working brewery. We then visited a workspace development at Twitter Lane Farm which currently houses a business manufacturing and selling speciality candles and a children's clothes/toy shop. Development of the site is on-going. The farmer commented that he was constantly grappling with Planning issues particularly in relation to traffic and transportation. Lastly we visited Poorsland Community workspace which is located in an isolated rural village. LRF has played a key role in assisting farmers and local communities in all of these developments.
3. I understand that LRF was first brought to Members' attention as part of the Best Value review of Economic Development and Regeneration some 4 or 5 years ago. Shortly after that review LRF was cited in the review of Countryside Services. In both cases LRF was commended for its work. I do feel that we need to think seriously about whether or not there are lessons which North Yorkshire could learn from the approach in Lancashire and the work of LRF. We will be exploring the support given to farmers in North Yorkshire with representatives from Business Link, Farming Wildlife and Advisory Group and Business Support and Development Ltd at our meeting on 22 June 2007.

Economic Development Strategy

4. A task group is planning to have a progress/briefing session with officers later this month.

Vocational Training and Education for Young People aged 14-19

5. The Committee was first involved in this subject in 2005 and reported to the Executive at that time. Since then we have continued to monitor the situation. We received our last briefing at our meeting on 16 March which led to the setting up of a Member task group. The task group will look at a number of aspects of the service in more detail including the % of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), the curriculum "offer", partnership working and engagement with employers. The objective of the task group will be to advise the rest of the Committee as to whether or not the Committee could make a positive contribution to any of these issues, including highlighting good practice across the County. The task group is meeting on 21 May 2007 at 10.00am.

County Councillor John Savage

Chairman - Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

08 May 2007