

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 May 2007

COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The Communications Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met once since the last full Council meeting.

In-depth topic – Engaging with Hard to Reach Groups

2. The County Council has a duty to consult and consider the needs of all its service users and the wider community.

The purpose of our current in-depth project has been to learn about the range of groups we engage with and why some people's voices aren't heard as readily as others, resulting in their needs not being taken into account in our policy development, service planning and delivery, and decision making.

Since the last report to County Council, the working group, led by Cllr Houlton, has made good progress. We have discussed with officers issues about engagement with young people, migrant workers, BME groups, older people and people with disabilities. We have also visited meetings of the Scarborough, Whitby & Ryedale Speak Up Forum, Craven Housing Sheltered Tenants Panel, Stonham Tenancy Support and MAGIC (Harrogate) to observe how consultation with service users works in practice. We have also attended a shared learning event run by Harrogate District Council about hearing the voices of hard to reach young people.

The final stage of our research will focus on people living in isolated rural areas and how we might improve continuing engagement with people with mental health problems in transition from young people's to adult services. We will also be exploring how the County Council works with voluntary organisations to connect with hard to reach people.

Overview and monitoring

3. At its meeting on 30 March the Committee considered the following reports:-

NY Times

The Committee has an ongoing role in monitoring the newspaper's performance and the impartiality of its content. At our last meeting, we received a thorough progress update. We were pleased to hear that the number of people requesting information about jobs has increased since

NY Times started, and also that there are plans to develop interactive NY Times web pages.

Members were particularly interested in whether targets for achieving external advertising had been reached.

NYNET

Members received a report from the Chief Executive of NYNET on how the implementation of this major project will transform broadband services in North Yorkshire.

4. The Committee welcomed the new Head of Communications, Ben Hayes, and we look forward to working with him in the future.

County Councillor Helen Swiers
Chairman – Communications Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 May 2007