

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18th July 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 – 21 May 2007

Overview Reports

1. Presentation Yorkshire and Humber Regional Energy Strategy

Sian Ferguson, Head of Strategy Integration and Sustainable Development at the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly gave a very interesting and detailed presentation that described the role of the Assembly and the purpose, content and objectives of the new Regional Energy Infrastructure Strategy

The Committee were pleased to hear from the Assistant Director Central Finance that a new Energy Policy for the County Council was being developed and would be available in the autumn. He stressed that it was important that accurate base-line information was available before the County Council set any targets. He also confirmed that before the County Council can give its full support to the Strategy further work needed to be done to identify the allocation of responsibility for delivery of actions in the Strategy.

The Committee resolved to recommend to the Executive that the County Council should register its support for the actions outlined in the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Infrastructure Energy Strategy.

We now look forward to a further report on how the County Council proposes to deliver the actions contained in the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Infrastructure Energy Strategy be referred to the September meeting of the Committee.

2. Interim report – Use of agency/relief staff Task Group

Our new Vice Chairman; County Councillor Liz Casling introduced the interim report of the Member Task Group on the use of agency and relief staff within the County Council. The primary objective of the Task Group was ultimately to achieve savings for the County Council. She explained that in order to achieve this then the Task Group needed more time in which to explore in further detail, possible solutions and to monitor progress on 'Slivers of Time'.

We agreed that the Member Task Group should continue to explore with the Assistant Chief Executive (Human Resources and Organisation/Development Services) solutions to the management by the County Council of temporary, agency and relief staff and also to continue to monitor progress made on 'Slivers of Time'. The Group will report back to the September meeting of the Committee.

Progress Monitoring Reports

3. Risk Management

The Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services updated us on progress made on Risk Management matters and issues identified in the latest Risk Registers for the Chief Executives Group and Finance and Central Services.

Members commented that the prospect of a Local Government Review for North Yorkshire had led to tensions in the relationships between the County Council and local District Councils and suggested that this was included in the Risk Register. The Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services whilst acknowledging this to be a risk stated that any work in this area was dependant upon the outcome of the final decision on Local Government Review. We had to accept that until the outcome is known it would be impossible to do any work in this area as it could be seen as presumptuous.

4. Health and Safety Statistics / Performance

The Committee welcomed the report of the Head of Health and Safety Risk Management reviewing performance in terms of health and safety management during 2006/2007 and identifying future actions for 2007/2008.

We were advised that the accident statistics contained in the report were in line with what had been expected and that as a consequence of lessons being learned and good practice being shared health and safety management in North Yorkshire was improving.

Members are interested to see how the statistical information on health and safety is available and how it can be analysed to see if any trends can be identified and preventative work undertaken. We accept of course that as awareness levels increase and the accuracy of the data improves it is possible that this could lead to a rise in the number of health and safety incidents reported and this must be taken into consideration when we look at future reports.

5. Corporate Asset Management – Annual Report Performance Report 2007

This was the third successive report of of the Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services on the annual Property Performance Report 2007. We are thrilled that the County Council now has knowledge of its entire property portfolio and could begin to analyse the information in a structured way and to target resources to produce the greatest benefits and efficiencies.

Despite the progress made however we have concerns that the Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services has reservations about the quality of the data collected and the red, amber green of reporting system. We hope that the reassurances given to us *'that one year from now concern about data quality will no longer be an issue'* will prove to be the case.

6. Procurement Action plan 2007 / 2008

It was interesting to hear the report of the Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services outlining a programme of activities to improve procurement practices across the County Council. We are pleased that the programme is designed to concentrate on those areas where a real difference could be made to current procurement practices, although we understand that any changes introduced will take time before positive results can be seen.

7. And finally

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome my new Vice Chairman County Councillor Casling and to reiterate the views of County Councillor Carl Les when he commented about our most recent Task Group chaired by Councillor Casling; *'an excellent example of how Scrutiny, Management Board and the Executive could work effectively together'*.

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

June 2007