

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 July 2007

STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Adult Social Care, Economic Development, Library and Information Services)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE

Strategic Commissioning Conference

Members will be aware that our fifteen year commissioning strategy, 'Strategic Commissioning for Independence, Well-being and Choice' was officially launched at a one-day conference in Harrogate on 27th June.

The strategy describes North Yorkshire County Council's commissioning intentions and how these will influence the future provision of social care support for North Yorkshire's citizens. The first strategy implementation plan was also launched, which will move the strategy into reality.

North Yorkshire is at the forefront of work on strategic commissioning. We are one of the first local authorities to publish a long-range strategic commissioning strategy for the entire adult population we serve, and we were able to secure speakers and workshop leaders of national standing.

The conference attracted a good deal of interest both locally and nationally. Over 230 people attended on the day, and our partners in the independent provider sector, third sector (voluntary and community services) and health service were strongly represented. We also had many senior representatives local authorities across the region, keen to learn from North Yorkshire. The feedback that we have received from delegates has been extremely positive.

Of course the conference was just the start of our journey to transform the way we commission social care in North Yorkshire in the future. We will be working closely with our partners to capitalise on the enthusiasm they demonstrated during the workshops and feedback session. We are organising a programme of district events during late 2007 to engage closely with local leaders, partners and communities.

Copies of the strategy and its accompanying data book are available on the county council website at www.northyorks.gov.uk/strategiccommissioning.

Telehealth: Transforming care for long term conditions

The use of Telehealth in Sycamore Hall, the Extra Care establishment at Bainbridge, is just one example of how the concepts outlined in the Strategic Commissioning Strategy are making a practical difference to the lives of service users.

Telehealth is the use of technology to remotely monitor vital signs such as the blood pressure, oxygen levels, weight and glucose levels of service users within their own homes. It is particularly relevant for people with chronic and long term conditions.

Service users monitor their own vital signs, and the information is transmitted to a medical centre, where it is interpreted by a health worker. Action can be taken swiftly if the data indicates that there is a problem.

Telehealth can reduce avoidable hospital admissions, and enable earlier discharge. It also encourages service users to play a role in actively managing their own conditions, rather than being passive recipients of care. Above all, it allows service users to remain in their own homes and maintain their independence.

Within Sycamore Hall the Telehealth technology is used by tenants either independently or with the support and assistance of a Resource Worker. To date the technology has prevented one hospital admission and has provided an early indication of ill health in another service user.

New Development at Catterick Garrison

Final approval was signed off on the 2nd July for a £20m Sports and Leisure Centre to be built at Catterick Garrison, on Gough Road opposite Tesco. This represents a major investment on the part of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and Richmondshire District Council (RDC).

NYCC's contribution to the scheme will be a state of the art Library and Information Centre costing £550,000, which will offer £50,000's worth of new books, DVD's, Playstation games and other items for loan. In addition, the library will provide 10 new flat screen computers for free public use, as well as 2 meeting/interview rooms that will be available for hire by local groups, businesses and organisations.

As well as the library, the new building will house training and sporting facilities including a swimming pool complex, a military rehabilitation centre, a six court sports hall, a fitness centre and an aerobics/fitness studio, a climbing wall and toilet/changing facilities for both children and adults that will be available for use by the local community as well as the Army.

The District Council will make a £450, 000 contribution to the sports hall, which will provide full community access and will address the recognised need for indoor sports provision in Richmondshire.

It is anticipated that the new development will help to achieve targets set by the District and County Council through the Local Area Agreement to improve the wider well being of local communities by increasing participation in sport and physical activity; and is an excellent example of how, through partnership working with the Army and the District Council, NYCC has been able to plan and develop future access to a range of new and improved services for the benefit of the wider community.

Catterick will be the twentieth library to have been rebuilt or refurbished through NYCC's £6 million investment programme for its libraries. Building work is expected to commence in late Autumn 2007, with an opening date of March 2009.

Equal Lives for people with Physical and Sensory Impairments

The multi-agency Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board was set up in June 2006. It aims to ensure that services are planned and delivered in ways that enable people with Physical and Sensory Impairment to exercise choice and control over how their additional needs are met, and to promote access to services.

The partnership recently undertook an extensive consultation exercise, designed to ensure that it is addressing the issues that matter to people with physical and sensory impairments in North Yorkshire. As a result, the partnership has developed a three year strategy called 'Equal Lives'.

The Equal Lives strategy covers a wide range of themes, including health, housing, transport, employment, social care services, access and information. A multi-agency action plan has also been produced. The strategy and action plan are both available on the North Yorkshire County Council website.

New online resources available from libraries

Libraries in North Yorkshire are continuing to build on the range of online services that they offer via their People's Network computers.

Ancestry.com is a state of the art online resource which offers library users access to the UK's largest collection of family history records. Resources available include historical census returns, Birth, Marriage and Death indexes and Parish records dating back to the 1500's. Just under 1000 North Yorkshire citizens have accessed this service each month since its launch.

Businesses in North Yorkshire can now use the library service to access British Standards. British Standards Online provides easy access to 45,000 publications covering information such as technical specifications, standards for production and building regulations. This is obviously a tremendous resource for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), and a real contribution to the economic vitality of the County.

Youth Charter for Library and Information Centres

Libraries at Northallerton and Pickering are the first in the County to be awarded an innovative "youth charter".

The Youth Charter is administered by Connexions York and North Yorkshire. Any service that deals directly with young people can apply for Charter. It is awarded by a panel of young people, who assess how well the service caters for people of their own age.

An awarding panel of young people visited each library to see the service in action, and to meet staff and young people. In addition to these planned visits, a 'mystery shopper' made an unannounced visit. They judged that both libraries fully met the nine demanding service standards.

We are delighted to have received these awards, particularly as the young people themselves found so many positive things to say about their experience of the libraries. North Yorkshire County Council has worked hard over the last few years to make libraries friendly and safe places for children

and young people and it is very pleasing to see this effort rewarded. It is hoped that further libraries across the county will be awarded the Youth Charter during the course of this year.

County Councillor Chris Metcalfe