

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 JULY 2007

STATEMENT OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Corporate Affairs, Performance Management, Procurement, Asset Management and Finance)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES

AES 2006/07

The County Council has submitted its Backward Looking Annual Efficiency Statement for 2006/07. This demonstrates that North Yorkshire achieved efficiency savings of £8.51m, and exceeded its target by £50,000. In turn the target level of savings exceeded the Governments' target expectations of efficiency savings which equate to 2.5% of an Authority's revenue and capital savings.

The County Council remains on course to significantly exceed the Government's expected level of efficiency savings over the three years of the Gershon programme – although progress will continue to be tightly monitored during 2007/08.

Procurement Update (Meet the Buyer)

A significant development has been the delivery of three "Meet the Buyer" events. These events are designed to give an opportunity to representatives from North Yorkshire County Council and the District Councils to meet with contractors who provide goods and services through corporate contracts, with the objective being to give suppliers a better understanding of the procurement processes operated by the Councils.

The events were organised by NPG on behalf of North Yorkshire County Council and 21 businesses attended the event at Scotch Corner, 48 businesses attended the event at Pickering and 49 businesses attended the event at Harrogate – with Business Link assisting in the marketing of the events. Feedback from businesses and Council representatives was generally positive and the events worked well in terms of raising awareness of the procedures Councils follow, and the underpinning need to comply with legislation regulation and local rules and guidelines.

NY Times

The new contract for distribution of the NY Times was awarded to the Royal Mail, following a tendering process. The contract will run for two years from July with an option to extend for one further year and is within the established budget for the operation of the newspaper.

Pay and Reward Changes

The final elements of the pay and reward review will be in place by the end of July. These include

- New arrangements for recognising long service at 20, 30 and 40 years compared to the previous award ceremony at 25 years.
- A prize draw every quarter for the 40% of Council staff who have not had any sickness absence.

- Ability of managers to recognise excellent service and performance through “thank you” payments of up to £50 for individuals and teams.
- The offer of a car to up to 200 resource workers (home care) who need a reliable vehicle to undertake their duties.

These changes are funded by savings from the changes to car allowances.

Development of New Arrangements for Relief and Agency Staff

Work continues on developing and implementing improved arrangements for managing relief and agency staff. Currently there are a wide variety of arrangements across the Council which do not make best use of the relief staff available and indeed the Council's existing part-time workforce who may be prepared to work additional hours. A scrutiny committee task group chaired by Cllr. Casling has looked at the issues and developed helpful conclusions on how current arrangements should change. Work on implementing these conclusions is progressing well with the aim of having new arrangements well on the way by the autumn. This will result in more effective use of these staff and a reasonable level of cashable efficiency savings.

Skills Pledge

The County Council is one of only a handful of public sector employers to take the Skills Pledge at the end of June. We were asked to do this by the Government because of our achievement of the Go Award which is about addressing literacy and numeracy skills for staff and our continuing commitment to developing staff through NVQs, notably the new apprentice scheme. In taking the Skills Pledge means that the County Council has formalised its commitment to provide literacy and numeracy skills development for any staff not functionally literate and numerate and to provide all staff with access to formal qualifications and development at a minimum level of NVQ2. In return for this pledge the County Council will receive funding from the LSC via the “Train to Gain” programme for all such NVQ qualifications. It is a real achievement that we felt able to make this commitment and demonstrates how much we value our staff.

Closure of Tax Offices in North Yorkshire

At the last meeting of the County Council in May, a note was presented by the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) on behalf of members at North Yorkshire HMRC regarding the closure of Tax Offices in North Yorkshire. The note requested support from the County Council in their campaigns to keep tax offices open and retain work in North Yorkshire.

A letter has been sent by the Chief Executive to the Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber together with a copy of the note from the Commercial Services Union, so that the County Council can assist in understanding the consequences of the changes proposed by HMRC.

9 July 2007