

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**19 DECEMBER 2007**

### **STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR HELEN SWIERS**

#### **TRADING STANDARDS & REGULATORY SERVICES**

##### **Avian Influenza**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> November, Defra confirmed Avian Influenza in a turkey flock on a premises located on the Suffolk/Norfolk border. It was subsequently confirmed that the Avian Influenza was the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain. Poultry on four other premises associated with the infected premises were culled as a precautionary measure. The total number of birds culled at the infected premises and the associated premises was 28,600. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> November, no further cases have been confirmed. The source of the infection has still not been discovered and wild birds can not be ruled out. Further surveillance, testing and epidemiological work on this outbreak is ongoing.

##### **Economic Impact on North Yorkshire Farmers**

The recent outbreaks of foot and mouth disease and bluetongue virus and the resulting disease control measures have had a major impact on the trade of livestock. Farmers are faced with a severe reduction in the prices paid for livestock. Their plight has been made worse by the dramatic increase in the price of animal feeds due to shortages of grain following the wet summer in Europe and droughts in other parts of the world.

The Trading Standards & Regulatory Services officers are liaising with the farming support networks and the NFU to monitor the situation. The Service is also working with operational partners to raise the profile of the issues and continues to provide support to North Yorkshire farmers in terms of advice and guidance.

##### **Crime & Disorder - Doorstep Crime**

Trading Standards & Regulatory Services has pioneered various initiatives to tackle 'doorstep crime', particularly when directed against older adults in the County. One particularly effective initiative has been the development of No Cold Calling Zones, set up in partnership with the police and local communities. The first zone was launched in November 2005 at Great Ayton and zones can now be found right across North Yorkshire. The service has now celebrated the launch of the 100th zone on 7th November 2007, when residents of older persons sheltered housing around Queen St, Filey, were covered. The zone was created in conjunction with North Yorkshire Coast Community Partnership, the town council and local police, who had identified the area as one being targeted by criminals preying on vulnerable residents. County Councillor Geoffrey Cullern, the local member, represented the

County Council at the launch of the 100th zone, which is the first of several zones planned for Filey

Another initiative undertaken to heighten partnership awareness of doorstep crime has been the training of North Yorkshire Police. Over the last four years Trading Standards officers have been providing training to the police on doorstep crime activities. In the latest series of training sessions approximately 200 police officers from Central Division covering York and Selby received an insight into what the County Council's Trading Standards & Regulatory Services do and how the two services can work together to reduce this crime. The training has been well received and the County Council's Officers given high praise by the police for the work undertaken to date.

The Service continues to prosecute cold-calling traders who deceive residents and recent persecutions included a fish seller; an alarm company Director and a Tarmac. All were convicted and fined for a variety of offences.

### **Weight Restriction Orders**

Trading Standards & Regulatory Services has also continued to enforce the various weight restriction orders in place on the county's roads and bridges. This work is popular both with residents, whose quality of life is seriously affected by heavy vehicles passing close by their homes, and with Highways, who have a lower repair bill for the county's historic bridges. October and November saw a total of sixty six drivers being convicted of breaching the restriction on the old A1 at Fairburn with fines of between £150 and £300 and orders for prosecution costs being imposed. Work has also started on the restriction on Quaker lane in Northallerton with the first two cases being heard at Northallerton Magistrates' Court in November.

### **Safety of Sports Grounds - FA Cup second round**

Harrogate Railway Athletic reached the second round of the FA cup playing Mansfield Town and were expecting a crowd of much greater capacity than usual at their Wetherby Road Stadium. They initially planned to install two temporary stands with a seating capacity of over 500 each. This would have necessitated a temporary safety certificate and advisory visits were carried out by Trading Standards and Regulatory Services officers who administer the legislation to ensure that safety requirements would be satisfied.

The club in the end decided to limit the number of spectators to suit the existing facilities. However, Trading Standards and Regulatory Services was still involved in working with the club to ensure that spectators could be accommodated safely. The match, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December passed off smoothly with no crowd troubles. Sadly the club lost 3-2 to Mansfield Town.

## **DEVELOPMENT & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES**

### **Economic Development**

#### **2012 Olympics**

A proposal was agreed by the York and North Yorkshire Partnership Executive last week to develop a sub-regional response to “Yorkshire Gold”, the regional plan to maximise opportunities arising from the Olympic and Paralympic games. This focuses on 5 key themes – sport, communities, culture, tourism and business. It is hoped to set up a small team in the York & North Yorkshire Partnership Unit to champion and develop these themes, particularly the culture, tourism and business elements. The objective is to use the Olympics as a means of promoting economic development leading up to 2012 and to provide a lasting legacy.

#### **Festivals and Events and Creative Industries**

North Yorkshire Culture has published a high quality promotional copy of the Creative Industries and Festivals and Events business plan proposals. The proposals set out a case for investment in both sectors as a cultural tourism asset and economic driver for the sub-region. The proposals are being distributed to key regional economic development, tourism, and cultural policy makers and funders, as well as business leaders. Proposals are currently being developed to take forward the initiatives in these sectors.

**County Councillor Helen Swiers  
19 DECEMBER 2007**

**COUNTY COUNCIL STATEMENT**  
**FOR COUNTY COUNCILLOR HELEN SWIERS**

**19 DECEMBER 2007**

**Community Planning**

Crime and Disorder

Further to my last statement to Council confirming my role on the York and North Yorkshire Safer Communities Forum I am pleased to report that I have now attended my first meeting. The same legislation that affords me a seat at this table also requires the Forum to take on wider responsibilities – for example producing a countywide community safety agreement and participating in strategic intelligence assessments with partners – these changes have prompted the Forum to reconsider its membership and reconstitute itself accordingly. Final proposals are being worked up as we speak for formal agreement at the next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> December and I hope the “new look” Forum will meet from February 2008.

The Forum is currently engaged in negotiating new funding arrangements in support of joint outcomes and considering the new National Indicator Set to determine areas of work for inclusion in the revision of the Local Area Agreement.

The issue of funding for crime and disorder continues to be a concern. Government grant allocations have been reduced and some difficult decisions will have to be taken particularly in relation to district allocations and countywide issues such as domestic abuse and alcohol related problems. The Forum is currently looking at an appropriate way forward on these issues.

Post Offices

Post Office closures are high on our agenda at the moment. Post Office Ltd. proposes to close 2,500 sub post offices nationwide during 2007/08. To date announcements have been made in all parts of the county except for those in the Richmond Parliamentary constituency. As things stand at the moment we are facing a closure rate of around 19%; nationally the closure rate ranges from 13-23%. The proposals to date are for 22 outright closures with a further 18 post offices being replaced by much more limited outreach services. Our strategy is to closely examine any facts or figures that the Post Office has produced for its rationale on individual closures to raise awareness of the issue and to encourage people to respond either directly or through the County Council. This involves making the most of local intelligence and Members have an important role to play here. In encouraging people to respond to the consultation we are asking them to write not only to the Post Office but also to Postwatch, the independent watchdog, and to copy their letters to the County Council’s Corporate Policy team. This will help us when producing our own response. Additionally, we will also be examining the

'alternative branches' specified by the Post Office to see if there is a risk that they could close in the near future due for instance to the retirement of the sub-postmaster there. Representatives from the Post Office have offered to come along to our Area Committee meetings to respond to questions.

### Credit Union

I am pleased to announce that the Executive has approved the York and North Yorkshire Credit Union Business Case and we are in the process of securing the agreement of other key partners identified in the business case. Assuming we get this sign up, the next steps will be to formalise a county-wide Advisory Group to take the work forward. This will include requesting the Financial Services Authority to approve the extension of York Credit Union's common bond and then appointing a Development/Payroll Manager. Although Scarborough and Selby will be in the first phase of development, from day one every area of the county will have minimum access in the form of postal and internet access and PayPoint. This initiative provides us with a major opportunity to contribute to the fight against Social Exclusion and all of the many problems that surround the issues of debt in the County.

### North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership

The revised North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership structure, after full consultation, will be implemented from 2008. The major change within this new model is the inclusion of a NYSP Board which will meet as a minimum twice yearly. Its membership will include both County and District Councillors along with other key partners and the primary role of this group will be to establish and maintain the policy framework of the partnership. Work is now underway to seek nominations and establish the membership of the NYSP which will hold its inaugural meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008.