

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 DECEMBER 2007

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. This Committee has met once since the last full Council meeting and the main areas of work that I would like to highlight are set out below.

Committee Meeting 16 November 2007

2. This meeting focused on the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly Scrutiny Board report on "Scrutiny of the Rural Economy". County Councillor Shelagh Marshall and Lyndsey Bunn, from the Assembly, presented the report which focused around the support that Yorkshire Forward and its partners deliver to existing start-up and growing businesses in rural areas, and how business infrastructure is developed to enable these businesses to operate from rural communities.
3. Members of the Committee were asked to consider and comment on the draft before it was finalised. The report generated considerable discussion and the Committee has submitted a formal response on behalf of NYCC to the Assembly. A copy of the response is available on request from Jo Broadbent, Scrutiny Support Officer.

Scrutiny Project: Supporting the Rural Economy and Diversification in Agriculture

4. Work on this project is continuing and as part of this we have recently visited the Central Science Laboratory (CSL) at Sand Hutton, York to learn more about bio-mass fuels and linking this with the potential for farmers to diversify into locally.
5. Biomass is a plant material used as fuel from short rotation willow coppice and is a sustainable source of heat and power. There are a number of farmers already growing willow short rotation coppice in the United Kingdom but we were interested to learn of a farmer in Wetherby who provides heating and power from renewable resources fuelled by willow coppice grown on his own farm.
6. There is an opportunity here for the Task Group members to visit this farm and see the benefits of biomass heating for themselves and to explore further what happens to any surplus energy or surplus tonnes.

Moving Forward: The Northern Way

7. "The Northern Way" submit was held in Newcastle in November and was attended by County Councillor Robert Hesletine and myself. The event provided an opportunity to hear about the progress made to date and was attended by the private and public sector from across the North of England.

We attended sessions on the future of the Northern Way, influencing national transport policy and encouraging innovation in industry. Whilst the conference was very informative, the focus on the city regions highlighted the very real challenges faced within NYCC given the rurality of the county.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN SAVAGE
Chairman – Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall
Northallerton

7 December 2007