

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20th February 2008

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 – 7th January 2008

Progress Monitoring Reports

Corporate health and safety performance report first of the financial year 2007/2008

The report of the Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services reviewing the County Council's performance in terms of health and safety management during the first half of 2007 – 2008.

We were pleased to note a reduction in the number of reportable accidents/incidents and commented that overall we found the format of the report to be very clear and the data it contained useful.

There was some discussion around the disparity that exists between schools and industry where the installation of sprinkler systems was compulsory and were informed that the position was different for new schools. The Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services has agreed to provide us with a position statement/briefing note on sprinkler systems in existing, new and extended schools.

Payment of expenses to voluntary sector consultees

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance seeking Members' approval of proposals to review the County Council's procedure for paying expenses to voluntary and community sector representatives.

The Committee was advised of a previous piece of work undertaken by the Communications Overview and Scrutiny Committee on engaging with hard to reach groups. As part of the research for this project the working group had explored how the County Council works with the voluntary and community sector and this highlighted issues relating to the payment of expenses. The working group was interested in how voluntary and community sector representatives are recompensed for their time and expenses and found that the practice of paying and the level of expenses varies across the Council. Sometimes people have to fill in a form and wait for a cheque to be sent, which can take several weeks, and other times they are reimbursed at the meeting. If expenses are not paid on the same day, it can be a disadvantage to people living on a reduced income or who do not have a bank account, as they may not be able to afford to attend.

After listening to the background around the subject we agreed to task our Financial and Central Services Directorate to review the current procedures, to look at other Local Authorities and to consider alternatives for a corporate approach. We hope to receive a report to our June 2008 Committee meeting.

Enhanced two-tier working

At a previous meeting we agreed that enhanced two tier working should be a priority for the County, District and Borough Councils in North Yorkshire. We deliberated on how this Committee could support this and were very pleased to welcome the Leader; Councillor John Weighell and the Chief Executive; John Marsden to our meeting in November 2007.

We have now invited the Leaders and Chief Executives of each of the District and Borough Councils to come along to a Committee meeting during 2008 to share their thoughts and ideas with us on how we can continue to improve two tier working and how our Committee might support this process. So far we have been pleased to receive confirmation from Hambleton DC, Richmondshire DC and Harrogate BC.

In-depth Scrutiny Review

Succession Planning

The Succession Planning Scrutiny Review is nearing completion. We have already met with an officer from Newcastle City Council who provided valuable information on their approach to succession planning and visited Cambridgeshire County Council to find out about their partnership approach working with Cambridge City Council and Peterborough Council. The Group is currently drafting its final report and intends to present this to the Committee at the end of this month and, once agreed, to the Executive on the 4th March 2008.

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

February 2008