

Leader's Statement

Sub National Review (SNR)

Progress continues regarding arrangements for the future structure of regional bodies as a result of the government's proposals published last July. We are now in a formal consultation process which continues until July 20th.

The Minister for the Yorkshire and Humber Region, Rosie Winterton, officially launches the SNR on Thursday 22nd May in York. Over the coming weeks there will be a series of meetings on the issue which will include Yorkshire Forward, the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly and Local Government Yorkshire and Humber.

There are many issues still to be resolved, in particular the meaningful involvement of local government in the new arrangements.

Two – Tier Working

The Leaders of the district councils and the County Council met on April 30th to review progress over the last six months. Among the issues discussed were waste partnership, access to services, local transport and a joint council tax leaflet. Councillors and partner organisations will be kept informed of progress through a periodic newsletter.

Audit Commission Annual Letter

I am pleased to report that the Audit Commission's annual letter which they presented to the Executive earlier this month gives a very positive verdict on the County Council. The auditors confirmed that the County Council is one of the best councils in the country for delivering value for money and for improving performance in its priority areas "from an already high base". We received the top four star rating for our overall performance, and we are the 12th most improved out of 33 county councils and in the top quartile for improvement of all councils nationally. We have made progress across 65 per cent of our performance indicators.

Lead Member Children's Services

Members will recall that at the time of the Children Act in 2004 authorities had to appoint an officer as Director of Children's Services to ensure effective leadership at officer level on children's issues. The County Council put those arrangements in place at the required time.

Another part of the Act has just come into effect requiring the designation of a lead member for children's services to mirror the Director's responsibilities at a local political level. We had contemplated this some time ago, and concluded that the overall lead role should be attached to the executive

responsibilities currently held by County Councillor Caroline Patmore whose portfolio will be as follows:

Children's Services Portfolio Holder (Lead Member for Children's Services [Children Act 2004], Children's Services Issues, Special Schools, Youth Service and Youth Offending Team.)

Given the extent of the children's services area, Councillor John Watson's portfolio will continue to have emphasis as follows:

Children's Services Portfolio Holder (Early Years and all school related education issues and advisory service)