

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 May 2008

STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Adult Social Care, Library and Information Services)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE

Fair Access to Care Services

As part of the Fair Access to Care Services framework, the government requires that we state the level of assessed need for which we are able to provide social care services for adults. I am delighted to announce that members of the Executive have given their full support to a recent proposal to relax the eligibility criteria from “substantial” to “moderate” need with the aim of meeting lower need where the longer term risk to independence may be significant. This will enable us to help many more people to live as independently in the community as possible.

Since the decision in January 2007 to relax the eligibility threshold from “critical” to “substantial”, an additional 1500 people have been receiving adult social care services in North Yorkshire, and a further 1000 carers have been helped to look after and support a vulnerable relative or friend.

In the last year, services by way of targeted grants and other preventative initiatives have been used flexibly to deliver a range of support measures for people whose needs lie below the threshold of “substantial”. These preventative initiatives have made a real difference to people’s lives by providing essential support to help people live independently and safely in the community. The flexible and sensitive application of the FACS criteria will ensure we are well placed to meet the transformational requirements of the “Putting People First” Concordat and can focus even more effectively on the prevention and personalisation agenda.

Extra Care

I am very pleased to be able to provide updates for several of our Extra Care Housing Schemes.

Sunnyfield Lodge, Ripon, has now been open for a year and we are finalising arrangements for the official opening ceremony for this scheme in early June. Sunnyfield Lodge has been another very successful partnership development between Harrogate Borough Council, Hanover Housing Association and North Yorkshire County Council. This is the first extra care development in the area that has a shared ownership element giving a greater choice of tenure to users. The 32 units of social rent accommodation are all let. Of the eight shared ownership units five are sold and the remaining three are subject to contract.

Castleton Extra Care Housing scheme began with members of the Esk Valley community developing a vision for future services that would meet the needs of their local community. Volunteers from this community have put in many hours of work and raised significant funds toward the development costs. The sod cutting ceremony for Castleton took place in February 2008. This was a well attended event involving members of the local community and the main partner representatives from Scarborough District Council, Abbeyfield UK and North Yorkshire County Council. The Castleton development is scheduled for completion toward the end of this year.

Finally, work on the Brayton Extra Care Housing Scheme is nearing completion and the development will be ready for occupation at the end of May 2008. This extra care housing partnership is between North Yorkshire County Council, Hanover Housing and Selby District Council. There are 30 units of accommodation for social rent and 15 for shared ownership. Brayton is a milestone in that it will be the first extra care development in the Selby District.

Emergency Carers Card

Adult and Community Services is in the process of launching a North Yorkshire County Council Emergency Carers Card. The card offers a 24-hour, 365 day-a-year response to an emergency, such as a carer being admitted to hospital in a crisis.

The card carries a unique reference number for each carer which enables staff to contact "responders" who have agreed to provide alternative support.

The Emergency Carers Card is part of a raft of measures ratified nationally in a New Deal for Carers and is being made available on a rolling basis by the County Council across the whole of North Yorkshire. The emergency cards are being launched through libraries and supported by carers' centres.

Scarborough Literary Festival

The second "Long Weekend" Literature Festival held in Scarborough in April was a resounding success. Over 2,300 people attended the festival, an increase of a third on the previous year, and it attracted some well known contemporary British writers, including Ian Rankin, Joanne Harris, Simon Armitage and Simon Hoggart.

Many of the guest authors said that Scarborough itself had been a big attraction for them because they had happy memories of the town and were glad of an opportunity to revisit. The event in return provided a boost to the town's reputation and the local economy, and there was an increase in the number of inquiries received at the Tourist Information Centre during the festival.

I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of the library staff in Scarborough who put so much work into organising this fantastic event.

National Year of Reading

The Long Weekend was the first of a whole year of activities planned by North Yorkshire's libraries to celebrate the National Year of Reading, which aims to help children and adults understand the benefits that reading can bring to their lives.

An exciting programme of events based around monthly themes, highlights include specific events involving well known authors, children's events at Filey Festival, Richmondshire Walking and Book Festival, a new service providing books in Polish, book promotions across the County throughout the year, and even an appearance by a Dalek at Scarborough Library in June.

May's theme is Mind and Body, which will explore the link between reading and health through events and workshops in exercise, healthy eating, IT sessions for older people and alternative therapies.

20 / 20 Vision – Library and Information Services Strategy 2008-2013

The Directorate is currently developing a five year strategy for Library and Information Services, which will define the long term strategic goals for the service in the context of national and local drivers to improve the wider wellbeing and prosperity of local communities. The strategy recognises the key role the service has to play in a number of the Council's objectives, particularly community engagement and public access, and sets out the strategic aims for the service and the priority areas in which it needs to develop in the future.

Consultation on the draft strategy will begin shortly and there will be an opportunity for a contribution to shaping and influencing the strategy by Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Area Committees in the coming months.

Harrogate Library Refurbishment Update

The Council's proposals for the refurbishment to Harrogate Library have now been submitted to the Big Lottery Community Libraries Fund and we are awaiting feedback on the proposals and the final go ahead. A town centre location has been identified as a suitable temporary site for use while the refurbishment is being carried out, to ensure that we can continue to provide a good quality service with minimal disruption.

Subject to approval from the Big Lottery Fund, the proposals will be considered by the Planning Committee in July, and the schedule is currently on target for the work to start in October.

In the meantime a blog has been set up that will show all the improvements planned for the library and will be updated regularly as the project moves forward. The blog is intended to provide a forum for dialogue between the Council and the people of Harrogate about this exciting project.

Visit to North Yorkshire County Council by David Behan

I recently had the opportunity to meet David Behan, Director General for Social Care at the Department of Health, during a day spent in North Yorkshire to see at first hand the services provided by the Directorate.

David met with residents and their carers as well as with front line staff, and saw how people have benefited from the Directorate's cutting edge initiatives such as extra care housing, Telecare and direct payments. He also visited Northallerton Library where he saw how the service has become a valuable community resource for carers and service users.

David found the day extremely valuable and said that he was very encouraged by the purposefulness and enthusiasm of the people he met, noting the appetite to develop high quality services that are appropriate and relevant to the communities we serve. In particular he commended the way we are embracing "Putting People First", the brown paper exercise and the creative use of libraries, together with the development of extra care housing.

Changes within Adult and Community Services Management Board

I am delighted to announce that Debbie Hogg has been appointed as Assistant Director - Resources within the Directorate.

Debbie joined us earlier this month from Bradford Metropolitan District Council where she was the Head of Financial Services. Debbie replaces Martin Surtees who left in April to take a post as Director of Performance and Commissioning for Newcastle City Council.

Kathryn Smith will join us as Head of Social Care Provision and Regulation, replacing Debbie Von Malachowski, who left recently to work for the Wilf Ward Trust. Kathryn will join us in June from Bradford Council where she is currently the Divisional Service Manager for Adult Services.

Access to Services Update

The new website continues to grow in popularity. During the recent strike by teachers, the site was particularly busy and was used by both the BBC and Sky as a link to provide local information. Another improvement is that translation facilities are now offered on the site, and this is for 6 of the traditional European languages. A range of consultations by Highways and Children and Young

People's service are currently underway that utilise the website. Online consultations increase participation from residents, are cost effective, and are a convenient method for them to comment on and shape our services.

Work continues to expand the number of one stop shops. The opening of the town centre site by Selby District Council is another important milestone. This site will be the one stop solution for enquiries to the County Council. This model of operating on a partnership basis is the key to deliver successfully the full range of 34 sites across the county. Almost 50% of citizens now live within 5 miles of a joint access centre and we are well on course to meet the LAA target of 76%.

Further services have been taken into the Customer Service Centre, in particular passenger transport, student support and the revised arrangements for waste disposal. Of particular importance is the new Emergency Card for Carers service, where the first point of call will usually be the Customer Service Centre.

We have continued to work with our partners to increase the quality of customer service and share training costs, for example, many of the District Councils have been sending delegates to attend our customer service induction programme.