

# **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**21 MAY 2008**

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

### **COMMUNITY PLANNING**

#### **North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership and Sustainable Community Strategy**

The new NYSP Partnership held its first meeting on 13 March 2008. Membership includes the Leaders of the County and District Councils together with representation from the principal public sector agencies responsible for promoting the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of communities in the County, partners from the voluntary and community and business sectors, and the seven district level local strategic partnerships.

The NYSP meeting approved the draft North Yorkshire Sustainable Community Strategy, which will be recommended for adoption at today's County Council meeting. The Strategy contains a vision for the County, based firmly on local needs, together with key priorities based upon the vision which can realistically be achieved in the medium term. In turn, these priorities have informed the development of the North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement.

#### **Post Office Closures**

Further to the County Council's motion regarding post offices, a meeting was held with representatives from Post Office Ltd. and Postwatch on 20th March 2008 to discuss the County Council's concerns.

The meeting discussed a number of inaccuracies remaining in the Area Plan proposal and the lack of information provided on the outreach proposals. A request was also made to Post Office Ltd. to withdraw its proposal to close the Aspin Lane branch in Knaresborough.

The second part of the meeting was concerned with discussing ideas about how the County Council/other community leaders and Post Office Ltd. could work together to aggregate efforts to protect the remaining network. Measures that the Post Office representatives suggested included: local authorities etc. taking on more Post Office business/use of Post Office services; locating Post Office facilities in local authority & other public access points; and local authority funding to allow branches to become sustainable for the longer term. It was noted that whilst in practical terms the County Council's support could not be

based upon providing a subsidy to post offices, other ways could be looked at by linking into the work that the County Council and partners were doing around access to services. It was agreed that a meeting be convened with representatives from Post Office Ltd. via the county-wide Public Access Steering Group to discuss Post Office Ltd's. investment plans in the remaining network and to identify how public sector assets could be used to fill in gaps in Post Office service delivery.

## **Credit Union**

Approval of the York and North Yorkshire credit union project has now been secured from the key partners. I am also delighted to report that Skipton Building Society has offered to provide, free of charge, the services of two of its recently retired non-Executive Directors to assist with project development support. Skipton Building Society has also offered to provide the credit union with free access to its call credit referencing business and free access to Call ML (on-line member identification verification).

The next twelve months will be focussed upon securing FSA approval of York Credit Union's common bond extension to the rest of North Yorkshire. This will involve developing the business case into a business plan and implementing the appropriate governance arrangements.

The network of interested partners for the credit union met on 30th April 2008 and it was agreed that a Shadow Board be established, with a maximum of fifteen members. A Project Development Officer will be appointed shortly and a development team of about five to six individuals will work alongside the post-holder to implement the necessary actions to achieve FSA approval.

## **Community Safety**

Following consultation with partners earlier in the year, the York & North Yorkshire Safer Communities Forum formally agreed the first Community Safety Agreement for North Yorkshire. The Agreement provides an overview of the role and remit of the Forum, its responsibilities under the new community safety regulations introduced in 2007 and identifies the Forum's priorities for action over the coming year. These priorities - which include reducing violent crime, road safety, alcohol harm reduction and tackling persistent offenders - are those which emerged as common, strategic issues across the county from the local Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership's own strategic intelligence assessments.

The Forum has developed targets - many of which are contained within the Local Area Agreement for North Yorkshire - for each of these priorities and have established a series of Joint Co-ordinating Groups to oversee collective

partnership activity in each area. Funding to sustain effective partnership initiatives in priority areas, or to develop new innovative approaches to achieve targets (particularly in areas such as alcohol) has been agreed between the Forum and the County Council through the Area Based Grant. This funding also contributes towards the individual work programmes of each of the district based CDRPs who continue to support and encourage partnership working at a local level to tackle crime, disorder and substance misuse.

## **DEVELOPMENT & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES**

### **National Convention of the Action for Market Towns**

I am delighted to announce that North Yorkshire will host this year's National Convention of the Action for Market Towns. The event will take place in Skipton on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October. The County Council, working with other partners, secured the event in competition with other market towns. The Convention will bring representatives from market towns across England to Skipton to hear presentations from Government ministers, share best practice, consider issues and challenges facing market towns and study a range of initiatives taking place in the area to support the regeneration of market towns.

I can also report that good progress is being made on developing the applications for funding for rural areas under the LEADER Programme for the Dales and the Moors and Coast. If approved, the Programme will bring funding over a 6year period to these rural areas. Bids have to be submitted by the end of July, including a local development strategy setting out priorities for investment and local management structures. In order to shape the bids, a series of consultation events have taken place during April with key stakeholders and further consultation events are due to take place during May with local communities. Subject to the bids being approved, the County Council will act as Accountable Body to manage the Programmes in these two areas.