

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21st May 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 – 25th February 2008

Progress Monitoring Reports

Corporate Asset Management Gateway Process

The Committee received a presentation from Roger Fairholm on the Corporate Asset Management Gateway Process. The Committee was encouraged to hear that the concept behind the Gateway Process was to ensure that there was a clear and uniformed documented process for dealing with all County Council capital projects with a value of £50,000 and above. We hope that this clarification of the procedure will lead to improved project outcomes in the future.

Members are keen to receive regular statistical reports on the numbers and progress of capital projects subject to the new arrangements and have scheduled a regular item in all future Corporate Asset Management reports referred to this Committee.

Draft Final report from the Succession Planning Scrutiny Task Group

As Chairman of this Task Group I was pleased to provide a summary of our work to the Committee which also included our proposed recommendations. It has been a thoroughly enjoyable and informative piece of work with input from other local authorities.

We are clear that the purpose of a succession planning scheme is to recognise and develop potential future internal managers by providing them with increased career opportunities and we hope that this will lead to increased future stability.

The final report was well received by the Executive on the 4th March 2008 when they noted and agreed that the Executive Member for Corporate Affairs and the Management Board would give further consideration to our recommendations. We look forward to the report to update on progress in this area.

Local petitions and calls for action

The Committee received a report of the Head of Corporate Policy which asked for comments from the Committee on the draft North Yorkshire County Council response to the national consultation on Local Petitions and Calls for Action.

The consultation document sought views on how the arrangements for local petitions could be strengthened and how a new system might operate. We also discussed our views on the call for action introduced under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Members agreed with an additional comment being included from the Scrutiny Board which advised against creating unnecessary additional bureaucracy around the work that as councillors we already do to deal with local issues.

Our overall view was that the consultation sought to formalise existing arrangements.

Use of relief and agency staff

The Committee was updated on the current position of the project 'The Use of Agency and Relief Staff'. Much work is being undertaken although we accept that this is a complex strategic project affecting all Directorates and is still in its early stages. We were encouraged to hear that discussions are ongoing with 'Slivers of time' to see if a 'closed market' IT system could be useful for NYCC.

We are pleased to note the progress and development of this project and look forward to receiving a further report at our October meeting.

Equality standards

In the report of the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development Members were given an overview of progress across all Directorates towards the achievement of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. We were informed that external peer assessment on our progress against level 3 will be undertaken and we are keen to hear the results of that assessment at our October meeting.

The Committee noted that although NYCC is fully committed to embedding Equalities and Diversity into the organisation there is a delay in achieving this. We agree that striving for level 3 should not just be a 'tick box' exercise but should be responsive to the requirements and needs of our changing and diverse communities and as such although we are disappointed at the delay we do support the decision to postpone applying for accreditation in 2008.

In-depth Scrutiny Review

Members' Induction

As Local Government becomes more complex, it becomes ever more of a challenge for newly elected councillors. Induction can make the difference between being effective and involved and experiencing long term problems and lack of understanding.

(Institute of local government studies, 2008)

The Committee felt that the timing was right to review the process used to welcome new County Councillors to North Yorkshire County Council and to prepare them for their new role. With elections scheduled for 2009 a Task Group has been set up to undertake this review to highlight areas of good practice and identify where improvements could be made. The Task Group is comprised of, County Councillors Liz Casling (Task Group Chairman), John Blackburn and Mark Wheeler.

I know the Task Group will be asking for your views on the induction process so please take this opportunity to have your say...

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

May 2008