

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 MAY 2008

STATEMENT OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Corporate Affairs, Performance Management, Procurement, Asset Management and Finance)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES

Withholding increments for performance and absence

This new aspect of the pay and reward agenda started from April 2008 as the last element of the wider agenda to be implemented. It was applied well and some 550 increments were withheld mainly due to absence.

NUT Strike

The NUT strike action on 24th April 2008 did not appear to have had a major impact on North Yorkshire Schools. Some 15 schools closed in total and a similar number had partial closures. There will be appropriate deductions from salary from all those taking action and all other staff were expected to work as normal.

New Look LGPS 2008

As announced by the Government, the New Look LGPS 2008 takes effect from the 1st April 2008. There are still some 'grey' areas – particularly around ill health retirement and conditions for membership – but the new scheme continues to provide first class, guaranteed final salary benefits. Full details are being communicated to members as and when they become available.

For the first time, contributions from scheme members from 1st April will be banded according to pensionable pay with the lowest paid paying 5.5% up to a maximum of 7.5% for the highest paid. Those former manual workers with a preserved right to pay reduced contributions set at 5% will see these gradually increase over the next couple of years to fall into line with all other scheme members.

The Government are now starting consultations on the next stage of the changes to the Scheme; 'cost sharing' between employee and employer whereby employee contributions will better reflect the actual cost of providing retirement benefits. Details of the CLG proposals will be published shortly before formal consultations with all stakeholders during 2008.

Transformation agenda

Work on this continues with the corporate framework and standards being agreed and implemented. The Chief Executive has just finished workshops with some 600 middle and senior managers outlining the agenda, the challenges and their role as managers. These will be supported by further workshops over the Summer on the key tools for managers to support them deliver the agenda including mobile/flexible working, Business Process Re-engineering, workforce remodelling, project management, and better use of new

technology. In addition the agreed corporate framework within which Directorates will be expected to work covers a range of standards relating to our staffing including:

- An agreed management to staff ratio of no less than 1:5
- A management tiers standard of no more than 6 with Management Board members counting as one and working down
- An accommodation standard of 0.8 desks to every 1 full time equivalent member of staff with supporting toolkits on mobile and flexible working
- Application of workforce remodelling to all groups of professional staff where this has not already been applied.

Establishing a corporate framework is important in order to achieve clarity and some consistency.

The Directorates continue with delivery of their specific transformation agenda. The revised structures in Adult Social Care Operations and Resources were implemented on 1st February 2008. Work is ongoing to embed staff into new roles and structures and this is being supported by a comprehensive development programme for staff.

Work is continuing following the 'Brown Paper Exercise' to streamline care management processes and to introduce new methods of working and use of new technology such as digital pens.

New Look Learning Zone

- **For Members**

April 2008 sees the release of the upgraded learning zone from Learning and Development Services which now has a dedicated members section containing a suite of e learning courses specifically for Councillors called the 'Modern Councillor'. The courses are short and engaging, typically lasting 30 minutes and are designed to allow Councillors to dip in and out of the course as time permits. The courses include community leadership, working with the media, partnership working, scrutiny skills and public speaking.

- **For Partners**

A number of partner organisations also connect and join the Learning Zone over the next three to six months and they will each have their own dedicated sections as well as being able to access shared learning space. These include 5 of the 7 District Councils, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and City of York Council.

- **Efficiency savings**

Use of e-learning enables NYCC to reach out and upskill many more staff than was previously possible with classroom based training. It provides universal access for all staff to training and development they would not have previously had access to. Where appropriate it also saves money as a cost effective alternative to face to face training. For example in 07/08 some £660k Gershon savings were made through this.

Communications

Helen Edwards joins us from Leeds City Council as the new Head of Communications. She brings a wealth of experience and skills with her and we look forward to her lead in further developing and improving our external and internal communications.

Regional Capacity Fund

Some £17m has been allocated to the Yorkshire and Humber Region to be spent through the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership on the following priority areas:

- Economic growth, prosperity and inclusion
- Climate change and sustainability
- Personalisation, health, social care and criminal justice
- Corporate improvement and value for money

The structure and process for allocating this money across the region is currently being determined with input from NYCC at Executive and Management Board level.

Changes in the Finance Management Team

Debbie Hogg joins us from Bradford City Council as the new Assistant Director – Resources – outposted to support the Adult and Community Services Directorate.

North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement

The new Local Area Agreement (LAA) is the 'delivery plan' for the priorities identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy. It has been negotiated and agreed with local partners and with Government Office. It will run for the three years up to March 2011 and contains the priorities for improvement with targets where they can be set. It has been agreed by the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership and was approved by the Association of North Yorkshire Councils on 30 April 2008. It is before the County Council today for approval before ministerial sign off in June 2008.

Local Government Young Solicitor of the Year

A member of Legal Services, Cathryn Moore, has been named the Local Government Young Solicitor of the Year. The award was made in recognition of Cathryn's work in supporting the implementation of the NYnet Project. Cathryn was the unanimous choice of the judges, and was selected from a record number of nominees at the awards. Cathryn has worked for the Council since 2004, but only qualified in 2006. Her achievement in obtaining the award at this very early stage in her career is commendable and we are very proud to have her as part of our Legal Services team.

Committee Services

Members will be aware that after 25 years excellent service for the Council, Steve Knight retired at the end of April from his role as Head of Committee Services. I am pleased to say that Steve will be remaining with us, and will be carrying on a part time basis continuing to support the Council Meeting and the Executive. Committee Services has been merged with Legal Services and Carole Dunn will now head up both services. Overall the changes are enabling the rationalisation of two closely related services areas, some very welcome extra capacity in the team, continued support from experienced officers in this essential area, and hopefully a smooth transition.

Accommodation – Bright Office Strategy

In keeping with the Council's Bright Office Strategy, officers are taking a systematic look at our accommodation. Much of the office accommodation throughout the county will need to be changed over the next five to ten years in order to meet our needs and to provide the best accommodation, as resources allow, for all employees. We have been looking initially at Northallerton, Harrogate, Knaresborough and Craven. We are just starting work in Selby and Richmond and we will then move on to Scarborough and Ryedale. On the Northallerton area (including Bedale and Thirsk), the proposal to which management board has agreed is to redevelop South Block, and to explore centralising more office accommodation in County Hall and White Rose House. That will enable us to provide much better, modern accommodation and to make better use of the space we occupy, and so be more efficient.

Video Conferencing

I am pleased to be able to say that videoconferencing is now up and running at 10 sites throughout the county and that the chairs and vice chairs of the Area Committees have pioneered its use in their meeting! Video conferencing can help the council save time and money, and contribute to more efficient working, as well as cutting down carbon emissions from staff and member travel. The picture and sound are clear, and with a few simple adjustments your meeting can run just as it would have done face to face. Video conferencing facilities are located at: County Hall (there are 3); White Rose House, Northallerton; Ryedale House, Malton; North Yorkshire House, Scarborough; Westbourne House, Selby; Armoury House, Skipton; Jesmond House, Harrogate; and Highgate House, Ripon. The challenge now is to make sure we make good use of the equipment and I would urge you all to try it. Over the next few months we will also be rolling out systems for multi-user audioconferencing and a network of touchdown points for officers and members to be able to log in and work as normal wherever they are in the county.

Disaster Recovery

The building work to complete the Disaster Recovery (DR) Facility at North Yorkshire House, Scarborough will be completed by the end of the May.

The disaster recovery unit consists of two rooms, a permanent room, used to host facilities for holding an up-to-date copy of data and information held in the County Hall data centre. It has many of the facilities found in a normal data centre such as air conditioning, uninterruptible power supply (UPS) and gas discharge systems. The use of this smaller room will be extended over the next 6-18 months to include standby solutions for the top 7 applications (as defined by the service continuity group).

The data and information within the permanent area is kept up to date by copying from the County Hall (Storage Area Network) SAN via the newly installed NYNet link. The link between County Hall and North Yorkshire House was switched on the 14th February. Since this date, data has been transferred successfully along the 1Gb link. Over coming months the amount of data "mirrored" and frequency of update will be optimised and the number of protected applications increased.

The second, much larger room has also been prepared for use as a computer room with network and power facilities being laid underneath the false floor all connecting back to a distribution panel. This area will only be utilised in the event of a major disaster but is currently used as normal office accommodation. If the servers are lost at County Hall, all office staff will be asked to leave this area and via contractual agreement with a Disaster Recovery company (to be established within the next 18 months), selected servers and hardware will be brought in and configured within 24 hours. This equipment will be used to recover service back to the Council within an anticipated 5-7 day period.

It is anticipated that once established, annual testing of the DR facilities will take place as agreed with internal and external audit.

12 May 2008