

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

23 JULY 2008

STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR GREG WHITE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community Engagement / Duty to Involve

As part of our response to the new duty to involve and engage our communities more in our decision making processes, we have agreed with our partners the need for a community engagement framework at North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership level. The aim is to adopt a more co-ordinated approach, agreeing shared principles, avoiding 'consultation fatigue', and ensuring that findings are shared where appropriate. A task and finish officer group has been established to progress this work.

North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership

The North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership (NYSP) will be publishing its Sustainable Community Strategy 2008/18 (SCS) and related Local Area Agreement 2008/11 (LAA) in mid-July. The SCS sets out the NYSP's ten-year vision for making North Yorkshire an even better place in which to live, work and visit. The LAA - which received Ministerial sign-off in early June - is the 'delivery mechanism' for the SCS, setting out specific targets to help ensure this vision is achieved.

The NYSP Executive recently reviewed the draft 'Strategic review of the impact of inward migration from the EU Accession States in North Yorkshire'. The draft review will shortly go to consultation with NYSP partners and representatives from migrant communities, to help draw up an action plan of key priorities.

Post Office closures

Senior Marketing Development Managers from Post Office Ltd met with the county-wide Access to Services Steering Group on 27th June. Two approaches were discussed in relation to how local authorities and other public sector organisations could support post office services. These included money transmission services (cash collection / bill payments / housing benefit fraud detection etc) and public consultation services (poster-leaflet campaigns / surveys etc).

Post Office Ltd's money transmission services are of greatest relevance to district councils and they have been asked to contact the Post Office direct if they are interested in working with Post Office Ltd. on this agenda. We will also be looking into the possibility of the county council and other public sector organisations making use of Post Office Ltd's consultation services. More broadly, Post Office Ltd. are carrying out various pilots in different parts of the county with local authorities to see how partnership working can help sustain the network and we will be looking to see if similar arrangements can be put in place in North Yorkshire.

At the time of writing we are still awaiting the decision from Post Office Ltd regarding the possible closure of the Aspin Lane branch in Knaresborough.

Community Safety

The York & North Yorkshire Safer Communities Forum is working to deliver the newly agreed Community Safety Agreement for North Yorkshire. Work plans are being developed by the Joint Co-ordinating Groups that sit below the Forum to deliver against the priorities of alcohol, domestic abuse, prolific and other priority offenders, road safety and violent crime. Other key issues for the Forum are establishing new arrangements for funding according to need, developing effective communication links and monitoring performance of the safer elements of the Local Area Agreement.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Yorkshire Forward Geographic Programme

Discussions are taking place between Yorkshire Forward and partners in the region, including the County Council, on the preparation of Geographic Programmes. As part of the principles contained within the Sub-National Review of Economic Development which aims to have decisions taken at the most appropriate level, Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency, is looking to simplify its contract and programme management arrangements by having a small number of Programmes based on local authority areas. These would be unitary councils throughout the rest of the region and North Yorkshire County Council for North Yorkshire. Under proposed arrangements, which are subject to approval by the Yorkshire Forward Board, NYCC would act as Accountable Body for a North Yorkshire Programme, sub-contracting with other partners, which would deliver Yorkshire Forward direct investment into the County. Management of the Programme would come through the existing officer Partnership Executive, whose membership will be extended to include all District Councils, and through the member Development Board. Priorities for investment will be agreed over the coming months, based on the current Sub-Regional Investment Plan which will be aligned to reflect Yorkshire Forward priorities. It is anticipated that the new Geographic Programmes will become operational from April 2009.

Eco -Town Proposals

Leeds City Region Leaders have responded on 8th July to the Government's proposals to develop an Eco -Town within the Leeds City Region. Eco - towns are proposed as part of the solution to meet the current and anticipated shortage of housing. They will be new settlements of between 5 and 20,000 houses developed on sustainable principles and with a high level of affordable housing. Leaders resolved that none of the sites put forward – and which were all in Selby district – could be supported. While Leaders recognised that there is a significant challenge in the City Region in delivering levels of housing in sustainable locations, they took the view that there is not a suitable site within the City Region. They have responded to Government that they would wish for work to be undertaken on how possible Government resources that could be allocated for an eco–town could be used to increase affordable housing across the City Region. They have also resolved that a new report be prepared on how Government housing numbers can be delivered without an Eco-Town. Government is expected to publish its list of 15 locations for Eco-Towns during the course of this month. Proposals will be subject to consultation and a final list of 10 locations published in the autumn.