

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

23 JULY 2008

1. We have agreed two major areas of in-depth study over the next 6 months. Both are much in the news at the moment, the first is flood prevention and response and the second is policing in the community.

FLOOD PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

2. Over recent years we have concentrated on a number of aspects of emergency planning and civil resilience ranging from Community Emergency Plans through to the potential dangers and incidence of animal diseases especially Avian Flu. The Emergency Planning Officer reports regularly on the activities of the County Resilience Forum.
3. After recent briefings about how agencies connect or otherwise with local communities about flood prevention and risk the Committee decided on an in depth review on Flood prevention and response with possible outcomes around proposals that improve community awareness, engagement and influence. "Pilot" two tier scrutiny work was envisaged.

The Pitt Review

4. After agreeing the above along comes Michael Pitt's review. To ensure communities are protected, Councils are asked to take a stronger local leadership role and be at the centre of flood risk management. He calls for clarification of roles, more effective co-operation between responsible organisations, better protection of infrastructure and wider and deeper public engagement.
5. To a large extent this confirms the timeliness of our study. Essentially, the Committee will assess whether NYCC has learnt the lessons of the Pitt report and whether his recommendations are being met.
6. Pitt highlighted what he saw as a lack of ownership. This will be one area under particular focus alongside what the best arrangements for community participation and influence might be.
7. Pitt sees "upper tier" as the responsible authority. In this vein he proposes a "Scrutiny Committee" to review work by public sector bodies and essential service providers in order to manage flood risk, underpinned by a legal requirement to co-operate and share information.

8. Interestingly, he believes holding scrutiny meetings about flooding danger in flood risk areas would send that strong leadership message. These would be attended by Water Companies and Environment Agency representatives.
9. By taking the initiative through Scrutiny; assuming we can get the method/arrangements right, ie, portfolio holder involvement, district representation, good governance we can emerge with something that is workable, builds upon good practice and that all are comfortable with.

POLICING IN THE COMMUNITY

10. Last year the government commissioned Sir Ronnie Flanagan to conduct an independent review of policing in England and Wales, and one of the areas he was asked to make recommendations on was improving local accountability. The Flanagan Review, while it set out various options for improving accountability, did not make any recommendations as to which model should be adopted. Rather it left it to the forthcoming green paper on the police to debate how police accountability could best be improved. With the national rollout of neighbourhood policing, the committee believes its attention should focus in this area. Planning for this work is in preparation.

PAUL RICHARDSON

Chairman

Safe & Sustainable Overview & Scrutiny Committee

County Hall

NORTHALLERTON

Background documents: Nil

14 July 2008