

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

17 DECEMBER 2008

STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR GREG WHITE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Helping Local People and Business

NYCC already pays 97 per cent of bills within 30 days, with the remaining 3 per cent being where there are invoice queries. Any requests, from small and medium businesses in North Yorkshire, for early settlement would be treated sympathetically.

NYCC is a major financial sponsor of the Citizen Advice Bureaus and a supporter of the new Credit Union. We will continue to look for practical and cost effective ways of supporting North Yorkshire people in these difficult times.

Economic Development

There is much talk at the moment about the worsening economic climate, the impact of the credit crunch on businesses and likelihood of redundancies. So what is the position in North Yorkshire? It is probably too early to give a definitive view on this as it will take time for statistics to reflect the real impact and for interventions put in place by Government and the Regional Development Agency to take effect. Recent unemployment figures show that the number of people out of work in North Yorkshire increased by 236 in October of this year to 5,676. Last year the total fell by 208 in the same period. The claimant count unemployment rate for North Yorkshire is now 1.7%, up by 0.4% on the year. The rate for the region is 3% and for the UK 2.6%. However, the county figure masks a diverse picture at district level. While Scarborough and Harrogate districts have seen monthly increases of over 7%, Hambleton and Ryedale experienced a small reduction in the number of claimants.

While economic conditions are undoubtedly difficult, particularly in terms of businesses accessing finance, experience of previous downturns shows that the North Yorkshire economy, with a preponderance of small businesses, shows a higher degree of resilience compared with neighbouring areas where large businesses predominate. This does not mean that we can be at all complacent.

The Government has published its response to the consultation on the Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration. The Government has confirmed that it is to take forward proposals in a number of key areas –

legislation to require each region to produce a new regional integrated strategy, together with an implementation plan, and reformed regional governance structures which will give joint responsibility for their production to the RDA and the local authority Leaders` Board; the delegation of decision-making by Regional Development Agencies to local authorities, although it is not proposing new legislation to make that happen; legislation to create a duty for the County Council to prepare an economic assessment, together with a duty on the County Council to work closely with District Councils on its production and a duty on District Councils to cooperate with the County Council; and legislation to allow for the creation of statutory sub-regional authorities for economic development where local authorities choose to do this. Most of these changes will require legislation in order to be implemented. The document does not give a timescale on this other than to say that it will use forthcoming legislation.

Credit Union

The credit union project is progressing well. The intention is to go to the Financial Services Authority in December to seek approval to extend York Credit Union's common bond to the rest of North Yorkshire. The consultants provided by Skipton Building Society are assisting in this work. Area Advisory Groups have been set up in Scarborough and Selby districts to identify customer access points and secure volunteer commitment. Area Advisory Groups will be set up elsewhere in the county on the basis of two districts per year. However, from day one everywhere in the county will have postal, telephone and internet access to the credit union. In response to the credit union article in the August edition of the North Yorkshire Times a number of people have expressed an interest in becoming a credit union board member. A training event was held on 22 November for prospective board Members.

NYSP draft framework for community engagement and neighbourhood management

The North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership is currently consulting on a draft framework for community engagement and neighbourhood management within North Yorkshire. The framework is being developed with the aim of sharing resources and information to improve community engagement and neighbourhood management by partners across the County. A small Task group has been set up to oversee this work and they are seeking comments on the work so far, looking at the principles, standards and workstreams which might form part of this Framework. The consultation document is available from the Policy and Partnerships Unit or the NYSP website (www.nysp.org.uk) and the closing date for comments is 4 February 2009.

North Yorkshire Welcome Pack

One of the challenges identified as part of the recent review on the impact of inward migration from the EU Accession States was access to information on services available to the community from all partners - often individuals do not know what support is available, or how they can access it. A web-based information pack has been developed with partners to bring this information together in one place, available in 21 languages and updated monthly to ensure all information is accurate. It is now available on the NYSP website (www.nysp.org.uk/welcomepack) and is being promoted through our usual channels, such as NY Times and our front line services. Members are encouraged to promote it to all members of the community and service users who would benefit from it.

NYSP Wider Partnership conference

This year's Wider Partnership conference was held on 17 October at the Pavilions, Harrogate and was a highly successful event, with over 200 delegates attending from across the public, business, voluntary and community sectors with the aim of looking at how NYSP partners can work together to deliver the ten priorities of the recently-launched Sustainable Community Strategy. Delegates participated in a series of workshops themed around the ten priorities and identified challenges and approaches to be taken in tackling these. Paul Johnstone, Regional Director for Public Health, also gave a speech on how we can work towards sustainable communities from a public health perspective, highlighting challenges for the County's key partners in tackling health inequalities. Feedback on this event highlighted that delegates found it to be highly informative and engaging and a conference newsletter will be circulated in December to underline all of the key points and outcomes for partners.

Policing Green Paper

The Home Office have published a summary of responses to the Policing Green Paper and the Government's next steps. The Government continue to believe that there are very strong arguments in favour of direct elections to police authorities and will be introducing the necessary legislation as part of the Policing and Crime Bill announced in the recent Queen's Speech.