

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Statement by the Chairman

17 December 2008

1. Migrant Workers in the Community

In November last year we reported our conclusions on the impact of migrant workers living in our communities. In particular we found that migration generates new issues and challenges for the providers of services in rural areas. It was therefore pleasing to see the recent strategic review undertaken by the NYSP. It provides an excellent summary of where we are and will help ensure that the key issues surrounding community safety, education and training, employment, housing and accommodation, health, access to information advice and community cohesion are being addressed in partnership.

Given the economic incentives to remain in the UK are likely to decline; only those migrants whose ties to the UK extend beyond the purely financial are most likely to stay in the longer term. It could well be if the numbers of migrants reduce and those who do stay tend to be better qualified, the resulting labour shortage could have a negative impact on the economy of North Yorkshire.

We will maintain a watching brief on this topic.

2. Joint Task Group on Flooding

I reported to the last meeting that a Joint Task Group had been agreed with the Environment and Heritage Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake work in relation to flooding. The intended scope which has been agreed is quite wide in that it aims to examine the extent and impact of flooding, what key agencies responsibilities are, how we might prevent flooding, our arrangements for response and recovery. I am pleased to see the strong emphasis on how we involve the public.

The first meeting of the Task Group has been arranged for 9 December when Members will meet with representatives of key agencies from Emergency Planning, Environment Agency, District Councils and Yorkshire Water. The project plan envisages completing work in the spring of next year. It is unfortunate however that a delay in the announcement of the Government's intention with regard to the Pitt Review (now scheduled for 12 December) means that the workshop will not be able to place its work in the context of whatever direction the Government gives to this issue.

3. Participatory Budgeting

We have discussed one of the currently most talked about topics in local government, Participatory Budgeting (PB). This is one of the many tools that local authorities and their partners can use to bring local communities closer to the decision making process about how local budgets are spent. It aims to give people a say in prioritising individual services or projects through community led debates, neighbourhood votes and public meetings.

Until recently PB has not been much used in Britain. It is now however rapidly gaining support from central government. It features heavily in the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'. We know that local authorities will have to commit to using some form of Participatory Budget by 2012. NYCC has very few schemes with PB characteristics. There are clear difficulties in running Participatory Budgeting effectively in such a large rural county. We will maintain our interest however, so we can assess how and whether it can be employed more widely and more often.

4. Compact Consultation: Thriving Third Sector

The Government has recently consulted on the future of the Compact, seeking views on where the Compact stands now that it has reached its tenth year. Our response was a positive one, bearing in mind the North Yorkshire Compact continues to be successful in improving working relationships between the statutory and third sector. This has spurred us on to look more generally at our relationship with the Voluntary Sector. Firstly by receiving the views of the NYSP Compact Steering Group, and secondly at our spring meeting we hope to enter into dialogue with the North Yorkshire Forum on the Action Plan for improving performance across the County in relation to a thriving third sector.

5. York and North Yorkshire Credit Union

We continue to be updated regularly on the progress in extending the common bond of York Credit Union to North Yorkshire. The Project Development Officer briefed us on the substantial progress that is being made. The Credit Union will go live across the whole of the County in April next year. We intend to play our part in making sure the public launch is a success.

PAUL RICHARDSON

Chairman

Safe & Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

County Hall

Northallerton

5 December 2008

Background Documents: Nil