

Leader's Statement to Council

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

The Audit Commission is due to announce its updated score for the County Council on 5 March 2009. This will include the Direction of Travel Statement and the Use of Resources Assessment. This will be the last CPA score as the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) takes effect from 1 April 2009.

I am very confident about our 4 star rating being retained and the signs are that our direction of travel rating will move to 'improving strongly'. I am also very confident about achieving the top ranking on our use of resources.

Such results will serve to highlight our continuing achievements in delivering high quality, efficient, value for money services to residents. Our policies have ensured that we have delivered high performance across key services -

- We have excelled at giving young people a good start to life by supporting the deliver of high class local education. We are in the top 10% for A-Level results and the top 20% for GCSEs. On performance our service is the 2nd highest amongst County Councils in the Price Waterhouse Coopers benchmarking rankings.
- We have delivered on our commitment to help older people continue living independent lives. Since 2005 we have increased the number of people helped to live at home by 31%. We have achieved a maximum 3 star rating from the Commission for Social Care Inspection who have assessed us having an "excellent" capacity for improvement and delivering "good" outcomes for people.
- Our policies on environment and transport have seen recycling and composted rates rise to 39% and bus journeys up by over 2.1 million since 2005. Our commitment to a sustainable future has seen us create the framework for innovate investment in capacity and technology to divert 75% of waste away from landfill. I am confident of our services once again scoring maximum marks.

I would like to thank all Members and officers for their contribution to the authority's continuing success. Our high levels of performance underlines the importance of the policy decisions this Council has made, making us one of the very best local authorities in the country.

Sub National Review

It is my intention to keep Members informed about the new regional arrangements which unfold from the Sub National Review. We are still on target to see the end of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly on March 31st with their responsibilities being taken over by the Joint Regional Board made up of 8 Members from Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) and 8 Members from the Yorkshire Forward Board. Following on from my comments at the last Council meeting it is now likely that Arthur Barker and myself will be joint Chairmen of that new board.

Economic Downturn

County Councillor White will again be reporting on the economic downturn and its impact in North Yorkshire but I would like to comment again on the regional situation. The level of unemployment continues to increase in the region and although there are still a considerable number of job vacancies the number is slowly declining. Yorkshire Forward continue to work with both large and small businesses in the region to give both advice and support with almost all their focus on retention of jobs as opposed to their previous focus on job creation. However, over the past two months there has also been some encouraging local news on job creation from Morrisons and Asda and slightly better news about proposals at HBOS and Bradford and Bingley for jobs not being lost to other EU countries.