

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 FEBRUARY 2009

STATEMENT OF THE BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR CLARE WOOD

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Recyclables Market

In my last statement to Council I made Members aware of problems in the recycling market caused by the recent economic downturn. I am pleased to report that due to our prudent approach to contracting we have been fortunate so far and have not had to scale back recycling activities or stock pile materials. Other Councils' have not been so lucky and whilst I can't make any promises I can assure Members that we will continue to work very hard behind the scenes to try to make sure we are able to continue to provide the full range of recycling services to residents. I will continue to provide updates to Members on this issue in the future.

Waste Minimisation

Members will also recall that I have previously spoken about my commitment to reducing food and garden waste, and that I have informed Members about the innovative community engagement project that we were running with 8 households in a food waste reduction challenge. The project culminated in an awards event for the families on the 18 December 2008 that resulted in all of the families being named winners and not wasters. The overall winner of the challenge was the McCarthy family from Skeeby, Richmondshire who reduced their food waste by almost 97% over the 6 week challenge period. At the end of the project they threw away only 22 grams of waste. Success was put down to a number of factors, such as better meal planning and following some simple tips such as knowing what is in the cupboards and using leftovers to create other tasty meals the next day.

The families all embraced the challenges set and commented how easy it was to reduce food waste with very little extra effort on their part. The final element of this initiative will be to take the Love Food, Hate Waste message out to many more people. We will also run a number of training events aimed at community leaders to provide them with the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to encourage their communities to minimize waste.

The exciting challenge now is to use the lessons learnt from this project to raise awareness amongst the wider community of just how easy it is to reduce food waste by taking simple steps.

Household Waste Recycling Centres

The contracts for management of the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) network are due for renewal in 2010. Preparation for letting these new contracts has started and over the next few months we will be reviewing the service in preparation for procurement. Amongst other things, we will be investigating the way we deal with reusable items, ways to realize local social benefits from contractors, and ways we can continue to increase the amount of waste we divert from landfill sites. Whilst we have seen huge improvements in both performance and the quality of service we provide to the public, these 2 areas will continue to be the primary focus for the HWRC service in future.

I am also pleased to report that lawyers are finalising the purchase of a site in West Harrogate and the planning application for a new HWRC and highways depot is prepared and will be submitted as soon as contracts are exchanged.

Long Term Waste Service (PFI)

Progress with the PFI project continues although the planned closure of the competitive dialogue and announcement of the preferred bidder has been affected by the economic downturn and complexities relating to planning and financing such a sizeable project. The timetable has been reviewed and it is now planned to invite final tenders during April, with the preferred bidder announced later in June.

INTEGRATED PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Skipton Bus Station

I am pleased to be able to confirm that Skipton Bus Station is operational. This means that the temporary arrangements on the High Street have been withdrawn which has helped relieve traffic congestion particularly on market days. There is still some work to do before that scheme is fully finished and I look forward to it being fully open in the next few weeks.

Scarborough Park & Ride

The new Park & Ride services in Scarborough will be fully operational from 14 February 2009. The bus services will be operated by Scarborough & District Travel using brand new environmentally friendly accessible buses. It is expected that passenger numbers will quickly rise towards the predicated 800,000 per annum. The Park & Ride will help relieve traffic congestion in Scarborough as well as increase the capacity for the local economy to develop.

Kickstart

You may have noticed that the Government used North Yorkshire's successful Kickstart scheme as the platform from which to launch a new round of Kickstart bids. The Kickstart scheme provides £25m of pump priming funding for the development of public transport services. It is an opportunity for the Council to work in partnership with providers to bring investment into North Yorkshire. In future years there has to be a commitment to continue Kickstart schemes on a commercial basis. If Members have ideas which they would like to put forward, please do so through Integrated Passenger Transport.

TRADING STANDARDS AND REGULATORY SERVICES

No Cold Calling Zones (NCCZ)

The North Yorkshire initiative, designed to protect vulnerable residents from rogue traders, commenced just over 3 years ago. The number of zones has increased dramatically, with the 200th being created at Wheelhouse Square in Scarborough, a sheltered housing complex for the elderly. Over the last 2 years there have been 600 doorstep crime complaints made to the Service, but no one living in a NCCZ has fallen victim. Trading Standards staff are revisiting zones at the third anniversary to ensure that signage is still in place and speaking to community representatives to gauge the effectiveness of the measures already in place. Early reports indicate that the NCCZ initiative is extremely popular with residents who appreciate the benefits. The increasing demand, by neighbourhood groups, for new NCCZ to be created, will mean that applications will need to be prioritised in order to ensure the best use of resources. Members are likely to be consulted by Trading Standards during the next financial year, when requests for new zones within their area are received, in order to ascertain whether or not there is elected representative support.

Alcohol Respect Campaign

The Service has responsibility for the enforcement of legislation associated with the supply of age restricted products within the County. Allegations of alcohol being sold to underage persons generate the highest number of complaints for the Service, in relation to age restricted products. In order to address the wider issue of underage drinking and the anti social behaviour, which it generates, the campaign sees the Service and other agencies working with retailers to jointly tackle the problem. Partnership members include Community Safety groups, neighbourhood police teams, district licensing officers, health professionals, the Youth Service, the Retail of Alcohol Standards Group (RASG), and the British Beer and Pub Association. The objective is to work collaboratively, to engineer a cultural change, so that key partners focus activities towards tackling the wider problems of underage drinking. A pilot project in Bedale has been running since August and the results are still being collated, but figures to date show a 75% drop in alcohol related litter in the town, together with a substantial drop in the number of police seizures of alcohol from young persons. The seizure figure being down from a peak of 44 during July, falling steadily through the campaign period to 7 in November and 0 in December. A similar campaign, receiving Home Office funding, has now been launched in Ryedale.

CLARE WOOD