

# **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**18 FEBRUARY 2009**

## **STATEMENT OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Corporate Affairs, Performance Management, Procurement, Asset Management and Finance)**

### **COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES**

#### **Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) Proposals**

In March 2008 DCLG announced a funding stream to support the delivery of regional improvement and efficiency strategies. The Yorkshire and Humber RIEP was allocated £17.6m for the 3 years 2008 – 11 (although year 2 and 3 allocations remain indicative at this stage) and the 4 sub regions have been invited to make suggestions as to how the funding might be used.

The County Council has worked very closely with the 7 District Councils, the City of York Council and other partners to ensure that the sub-region puts forward strong proposals that are likely to receive support. It should be noted that funding is not a substitute for existing projects but rather an opportunity to take forward projects that will improve the performance and/or efficiency of those taking part. The intention is that lessons can be shared with others across the whole region.

Much of the York and North Yorkshire submission centres around those areas where there is already a high degree of consensus amongst the County Council and the Districts, principally waste, transport, access to services, economy and NYSP/LSP improvements. It is hoped that the input and experience of the City of York will also strengthen the opportunities for improvements.

It is not yet clear when a decision will be taken by the RIEP on which areas to support, I am hopeful that progress will have been made by the next County Council meeting and I hope to have some good news to report back.

#### **Skills Pledge**

A minimum of 1,000 staff will participate in skills for life for the calendar year 2009. These staff are in roles that services have already identified as able to benefit from the programme and available NVQ funding. In addition, managers and staff will be informed of how skills pledge funding can be accessed and provided with an easy to use guide to assess each member of staff against the entitlement. There will be a significant increase in numbers benefiting from the programme over the course of the next three years.

#### **Consultation on new pension regulations**

This is a time of great challenge for public sector pension schemes. As well as the turbulence in financial markets, the Government has made significant amendments to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations including 'banded' contributions for employees. Scheme Members are now making contributions based on pay bands rather than the previous 6% for all.

Further consultation is now underway on 'cost sharing' and 'cost capping' in the LGPS. This is intended to be part of the Scheme from 2013. Whereas, to date, employer contributions have been determined every three years based on both fund and membership factors, this new consultation paves the way for employer contributions to be 'capped' (at a level still to be agreed) and for employee contributions to reflect more accurately the cost of providing benefits. In effect, sharing the risk of providing a guaranteed scheme.

This is only the start of the consultation process. To date, this Authority has confirmed that whilst it fully supports the Government's policy objective of continuing to provide good quality pensions for the local government workforce, it is essential that the scheme remains affordable, viable and fair to all - employees, employers and taxpayers.

### **Pay Review update - 2008/09 and 2009/10**

The panel has now been agreed for the ACAS arbitration for the 08/09 pay settlement and the hearing will take place on 10 February with a decision expected early / mid March. The trade unions nationally have submitted their request for 2009 and the employer's side is considering options. It is likely that the trade unions will ask for a one year deal at least at RPI with bottom loading for the lower paid

### **Procurement**

Officers involved in procurement have focussed on two key procurement issues in recent weeks - engagement with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and collaboration with other local authorities. Both are high on the Government's agenda and both make a significant contribution towards sustaining our local community during these difficult economic times.

We are in dialogue with the Federation of Small Businesses and Business Link to explore ways in which we can actively and legally direct business towards SMEs. Where this is business with a total value below the EU limit, provided we adhere to sound competitive procedures we can legitimately target opportunities towards SMEs by utilising our electronic procurement system which is free for any business which wishes to register. We are also continuing to actively promote standardised processes across North Yorkshire in collaboration with colleagues in District Councils, to reduce the bureaucratic overhead for businesses to the absolute minimum imposed by public sector legislation.

Collaboratively, when Harrogate BC join the recently let Office Supplies contract in April 2009, we will have achieved the first collaborative contract where all Districts, City of York and the County Council have collaborated and fully utilised the ensuing contract. We are continuing this theme by exploring further opportunities to collaborate with North Yorkshire Police and with the NHS Harrogate and District Foundation Trust at the same time as developing new collaborative tender opportunities.

## **Management of the Jacobs Property Contracts**

Following a review of the arrangements for managing this contract, the property aspects are now being managed through the Corporate Landlord Unit within Finance and Central Services. The Highways aspects of the contract continue to be managed through Business and Environmental Services.

## **Bright Office Strategy**

I have made previous statements about the work going on to improve and make more efficient our office accommodation as part of the Bright Office Strategy. On 2 December the Executive agreed to support the funding to press forward on projects on the County Hall campus and in Skipton. This investment is essential to ensure that we provide an appropriate standard of office accommodation for our staff so that they can continue to deliver excellent services to users.

In County Hall we will be redeveloping the HR corridor and the pensions and payroll area to make both areas more open plan and suited to modern working practices. South Block, where Children's Services are based, will be redeveloped to modernise it and to ensure it complies with health and safety and Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

In Skipton we are negotiating to share space with Craven District Council in a multi-use development called Belle Vue Mills. This will be a flagship project with genuinely innovative design and working practices; and it will bring a variety of efficiencies. Part of the plan is for the registration service accommodation to double as Craven DC's council chamber; and there will be meeting space, reception and IT infrastructure shared between the two organisations.

28 January 2009