

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 February 2009

SCRUTINY BOARD

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Scrutiny Board met on 5 February 2009.

Adult and Community Services strategic issues

Derek Law, the Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services, joined the Board to discuss the services' strategic priorities for the year ahead.

Issues covered in the discussion included:

- Safeguarding vulnerable adults
- Demographic pressures and meeting the needs of more people with dementia
- Supporting people in the economic downturn
- Transformation including delivering the Putting People First Concordat
- Modernising libraries
- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- Financial issues and the need for efficiencies
- Performance improvements and the challenge of sustaining performance

Policy, Performance and Partnerships

Gary Fielding, Assistant Chief Executive Policy, Performance and Partnerships, outlined his areas of responsibility and shared his view of the key role played by scrutiny within and as part of the County Council.

In particular he highlighted the increasing importance of partnerships in delivering improved services for people in the County. Scrutiny needs to extend its constructive 'critical friend' role to partners to promote better working together and can be a real catalyst for improved joint working. Members of the Board shared this view and were able to point to examples of where this has already happened.

Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

Board members were advised of the new inspection regime that is being introduced from 1 April 2009 to replace Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Members felt that information about this should be included in the Members' seminar programme and were assured that it was already planned to be part of the seminar on 12 February.

CAA will be made up of two main elements; an area assessment and organisational assessments of each of the public agencies in the area.

The area assessment focuses on three main questions:

- How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
- How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
- What are the prospects for future improvement?

The organisational assessments are made up of a Use of Resources and a managing performance assessment.

The CAA stresses the importance of the role of councillors in ensuring the views of local people are heard in the decision making process. The success of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be key in demonstrating that the Council and its partners are self aware, continually seek to make improvements and provide the local community with opportunities to participate.

Update on Implementation of 'Enhanced Scrutiny Powers'

The new powers of scrutiny to examine the outcomes of partnership working and the role of those partners under the duty to cooperate in delivering the Local Area Agreement will come into force on 1 April 2009. Government guidance is still awaited but the Board reiterated its support for using current arrangements and working collaboratively with Districts whenever appropriate. The current scrutiny review of flooding is a good example of this.

The Board also agreed that the County Council should seek to agree with Districts that the use of scrutiny to obtain information about local services or to raise a concern should be used only sparingly and as a last resort.

County Councillor Paul Richardson
Chairman of Scrutiny Board
6 February 2009