

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 MAY 2010

STATEMENT OF RURAL SERVICES, WASTE DISPOSAL, PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT AND TRADING STANDARDS PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR CLARE WOOD

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste Prevention

The County Council continues to deliver innovative waste prevention campaigns and has developed a comprehensive programme of activities for the coming year which will continue to reducing the amount of waste we have to deal with. Activity in the spring/summer months includes:

- The launch of a new home compost bin scheme. As Members may be aware, compost bins can accept raw fruit and vegetable peelings and garden waste, whilst Green Johanna's provide a safe disposal route for cooked and uncooked food waste as well as garden waste. Prices will be approximately half the recommended retail price.
- A fashion show using clothes and accessories sourced entirely from charity shops and featuring redesigned, customised and 'upcycled' contemporary fashions from up and coming designers. The evening is on Friday 28 May at York Racecourse and will show people that it is possible to buy chic and fashionable clothes and other items from charity and reuse organisations at a fraction of the cost of buying from new.
- Refreshing the Love Food Hate Waste message, with a particular focus on reusing leftovers in exciting new menus to reduce waste. Events will include live cookery demonstrations by local chefs using common leftover ingredients and store cupboard staples to create wonderful new food.

The County Council also continues to play a lead role in the regional waste prevention programme. The 22 local authorities in the region are keen to learn from our experiences as we lead in the delivery of a regional Love Food Hate Waste campaign.

Household Waste Recycling Centres

In my last statement to Council, I told you that the Council has awarded new contracts for the management of household waste recycling centres. The new contracts started on 1st April 2010. We have seen some changes to the way some of the centres operate, and general improvements in the appearance of the sites. The obvious changes to date are new uniforms for the staff and improved signage. Skips, containers and offices will be repainted over the next few months to improve their appearance and extend their life.

A greater staff focus on customer care has resulted in a number of compliments received in the first month of operation, and we are aiming for this to be a continuing trend. We will also see the amount of waste items sent for reuse to increase, and recycling levels to continue to grow.

I am also pleased to report to Members that we have taken ownership of land for a new HWRC and highways depot at West Harrogate and will be starting highways improvements outside the site very soon. Site construction will start later in the summer, and we are on target to open the new household waste recycling centre and highways depot in April 2011.

Long Term Service Contract

Work continues to complete the PFI procurement. We have submitted a final business case to the Waste Infrastructure Delivery Programme (involving representatives from both H.M. Treasury and DEFRA) confirming the project details and that it remains affordable. Until such time as WIDP confirm their approval we will be unable to make any further public announcements but I expect to be able to announce the preferred bidder very soon.

TRADING STANDARDS

Mephedrone controls

In March, Homes Secretary Alan Johnson wrote directly to North Yorkshire County Council's Chief Executive, requesting the involvement of the Trading Standards Service in enforcement work to prevent the sale of the drug mephedrone under the guise of plant food or bath salts. Mephedrone has been linked to the death of a 25 year old female in Norton and enquiries into the source of the drug are ongoing.

Trading Standards & Planning Services enforces the legislation covering the composition and labelling of fertilisers and regulations covering the safety and labelling of cosmetic products such as bath salts. In addition the Service is also responsible for enforcing laws relating to illegal sales of a wide range of age restricted products including glue and solvents to under 18 year olds. Whilst mephedrone was a 'legal high' for adults it is a different matter when children are involved as legislation covering the supply of intoxicating substances such as glue would apply to this drug also.

On 16th April mephedrone was made an illegal drug and as such enforcement will now fall largely under police control, but the Trading Standards Service will be in a position to use the 'consumer legislation' if suppliers try to circumvent the controls relating to the supply of the drug for human consumption by persisting with the plant food and bath salt claims.

Ebay Bidder Convicted of "Shill Bidding"

Following an investigation by Trading Standards & Planning Services a County Durham man, Paul Barratt, is believed to be the first person to be convicted of 'shill bidding' on eBay. Shill bidding occurs when a seller, or a friend or relative acting on his behalf, places fake bids on an item in order to increase the final price achieved in an auction. In the case, which has attracted national and indeed international media interest, trading standards officers used a new piece of legislation, the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, to allege that by making false bids Barratt had passed on materially inaccurate information about market conditions in order to induce consumers to buy the product at conditions less favourable than normal market conditions.

Barratt's activities were uncovered when trading standards officers received a complaint from a North Yorkshire businessman who had bought a minibus from Barratt after seeing it advertised on eBay. The minibus was advertised as having travelled 55,000 miles. Infact the complainant found out after he had bought it that it had travelled over 132,000 miles. As part of the trading standards investigation Barratt's eBay records were obtained and it was discovered that he had two user names and he was listing items for sale under one name and placing fake bids on them under another name. The items he had listed for sale included a Land Rover, a Mercedes, mobile phones and various pieces of commercial catering equipment. At Skipton Magistrates' Court on Friday 16th April, Barratt pleaded guilty to one offence of making a false statement about the minibus mileage and nine offences relating to shill bidding. He is due to be sentenced at Bradford Crown Court on 21st May 2010.

INTEGRATED PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Concessionary Fares

We are progressing with arrangements to take over responsibility for concessionary fares from April 2011. This will be a complex process involving staff transfers through TUPE. It also comes with huge financial risks for both County and District Councils. We are working with the current concessionary fares partnership, which includes the City of York Council to ensure a smooth transition next spring.

East Coast Consultation

The Department for transport has issued stakeholder consultation for the new East Coast Franchise. They are seeking views on what should be included in the information and requirements which are sent out to potential bidders. The County Council has responded to this. The key issues we have raised are:

- Improvements in the Harrogate to London line through additional direct services.
- Welcome the increase in direct services between Northallerton and London.
- Retention of existing East Coast service from Selby, however this assumes that the current Hull Trains services will continue.
- Expressed a desire for improvements in direct Skipton to London services.

For the future the Department for Transport are considering hybrid diesel/electric trains and bi-mode trains (the train configuration can be 'split' so for example a 'long train' leaves London and splits at Doncaster with one portion continuing to York whilst the other goes to Leeds). Both these initiatives offer greater flexibility which may help achieve our aspirations for Harrogate and Skipton.

CLARE WOOD