

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 19 May 2010

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Chairman's Statement

1.0 The Committee has met once since my last Statement, on 14 April 2010. The agenda for that meeting included the following items.

2.0 Yorwaste presentation

2.1 The Committee had a very interesting discussion with the Managing Director of Yorwaste and Cllr Arthur Barker, the County Council's representative on the board of directors. The County Council is a major shareholder in the business.

2.2 Yorwaste's business is waste management and recycling services, with an increasing focus on recycling and 'green' power generation. Members were told that Yorwaste had been hit by the recession, but has recovered, and that the strengths of the business are its people and a clear business strategy. Future development opportunities include having a greater control of the waste stream. In answer to questions from Members about why recyclable materials such as plastic is often sent overseas for processing, Yorwaste explained that this can be more economically viable because recyclables is a worldwide market, but that they were looking to using partners in the UK for reprocessing where viable. Road is still the main means of transporting waste, although centralisation of facilities may reduce transportation over time. We were pleased to have had the opportunity to discuss these issues with Yorwaste.

3.0 Carbon Reduction Projects

3.1 Our regular progress update included a brief report on activities in schools and the development of a renewable technology guide which will give advice to all County Council sites on installing renewable technology.

4.0 Improving Habitats for Biodiversity – Scrutiny Working Group report

4.1 The Committee discussed the working group's report and agreed its recommendations. The report identifies that school grounds and other land owned or managed by the County Council are all potential sites for protecting beneficial habitats for wildlife by, for example, changing grass-cutting regimes and replanting with native flowers and shrubs. The group focussed on bees in particular, because of their vital role in pollinating the crops we all rely on for food and because of their recent decline in numbers. One of the main factors for the decline is thought to habitat loss.

- 4.2 The group's report proposes that pilot schemes should be set up in seven schools around the County that are interested in taking part, and that a grounds maintenance manual be developed to help to spread good practice to other sites. Members agreed that we should all be advocates for habitat protection within our own communities, and with partners such as district councils. I have therefore proposed that a short presentation on the report be included as an additional item on the agenda for the Flooding Annual Review meeting on 30 June (see 5 below), as several district councillors will be attending.

5.0 Flooding Annual Review Meeting 30 June

- 5.1 We have arranged for a review meeting on flooding to take place on the afternoon of 30 June. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 came into force last month and introduced a number of measures to improve flood risk management and clarify roles and responsibilities. The County Council will have a lead role, and we look forward to receiving an update on this and other developments at the meeting. Colleagues from district/borough councils have also been invited to the meeting.

6.0 Minerals and Waste Development Framework Member Working Group

- 6.1 The first meeting of this Member working group was held on 14 April. The purpose of the group is to act as a 'sounding board' during the development and consultation stages of the new Minerals and Waste Development Framework. The process will have a greater focus on community engagement and the working group is an opportunity for Members from across the County to have input.
- 7.0 The provisional agenda for the **next meeting of the Committee, on 30 June 2010**, includes a discussion about Transition Towns. We hope to hear from speakers from the Stockholm Environment Institute, University of York and Kirkbymoorside Environment Group about community-led initiatives in York and North Yorkshire to reduce energy use.

County Councillor John Blackburn
10 May 2010