

Leader's Statement

Appointment of new Chief Executive

I have great pleasure in welcoming Richard Flinton to his first meeting as the new Chief Executive. It is very satisfying to see someone born and bred in North Yorkshire and having worked for the Council for over 23 years rising to the very top of the organisation. I am sure all Members will join me in wishing him every success during his time as Chief Executive of North Yorkshire County Council.

Appointment of Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services

The Chief Officer Appointments Sub Committee meets to interview short list candidates on Friday 16 July 2010. In light of this it should be possible to inform Members of the appointee at the County Council meeting 21 July 2010.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The current MTFS assumes a 5% cut for 2011-12 and 2012-13 which equates to £27 million. On June 10th cuts amounting to £10.8 million were announced for the 2010-2011 year which included £3.66 million on revenue, mainly Department for Education, Area Based Grant and £7.14 million capital, mainly from Integrated Transport and Road Safety. In the Budget of June 22nd possible cuts of 25% in Government Grant Funding were announced for the period 2011-2015 which equates to £43 million. Some commentators are talking of cuts of up to 40% over 4-5 years, but we will not know the exact figure until the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010.

The Council Tax is expected to be frozen in 2011/12 with the government funding at most a notional 2.5% increase. None of the announcements appear to have taken account of the cost of inflation to us or any increase in demand for our services, such as elderly care.

Regional Issues

The result of the general election has raised many questions about the future of regional structures in Yorkshire and Humber. Yorkshire Forward will now be abolished in 2012, there will be no Government funding to the "Leaders' Board" (Local Government Yorkshire and Humber) and the Government Office for our region is also to likely be abolished.

So called Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) appear to be the preferred way forward, but issues relating to their size and powers remain unclear at the moment. However the current Leeds City Region is in a strong position to form a LEP.

All 9 Councils which currently constitute the North Yorkshire sub-region have agreed in principle to a North Yorkshire LEP. I will keep Council informed as with new information as it becomes available.

Local Government Association Annual Conference

I attended the LGA Annual Conference in Bournemouth between 6th & 8th July. This year's theme was "Changing Times, Changing Minds". The main political speech was by the Secretary of State, Eric Pickles with contributions from Michael Gove, John Denham and Chris Huhne. One of the other non-political speakers of note was Karren Brady, Vice-Chairman of West Ham football club and replacement for Margaret Mountford on the BBC's The Apprentice television programme.

I found the whole conference underwhelming, with delegates seemingly resigned to the "Changing times" ahead but not yet having their "minds changed" about the scope and pace of change which will no doubt make local government look very different in 5 years time!

Executive Changes

Later on in today's proceedings I will be announcing changes to the size of the authority's Executive Committee in addition to the allocation of individual portfolio responsibilities.