

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**15 DECEMBER 2010**

**STATEMENT OF SCHOOLS PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN WATSON, OBE**

**Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The statement to Council on 13 October 2010 set out the approach being taken under the Children and Young People's Service Savings and Transformation Strategy. Members will recall that it is committed to giving highest priority to frontline services, while acknowledging that the scale of savings needed means that they cannot be protected completely. That commitment is reflected in the detailed savings proposals as they are being developed against the July target. In relation to staffing, for example, it is likely that the overall reduction in numbers will exceed 250, but weighted so that strategic support services would reduce by a significantly higher percentage (probably exceeding 25%) than the frontline (possibly around 8%).

In order to reach the £19.47 million target linked to the Comprehensive Spending Review, further reductions will be made in strategic and support costs beyond those previously envisaged. It appears inescapable at this stage, however, that further savings will also need to be made in frontline services, albeit as the measures of last resort. Such changes will be made through a combination of reviewing how some provision is delivered, what levels of service can be provided, and where charges may need to be extended or increased.

Every effort will be made to maximise service levels by doing things differently, reviewing practice for greatest impact on outcomes and ensuring the most cost effective approaches are used. Any potential use of charging in new areas of provision (eg in relation to transport or Children's Centres) will also be considered with careful attention to impact. Such changes would involve possible changes to legislation and significant consultation.

The Directorate remains on target to deliver the cash target for 2010/11. This includes savings made against most of the projects in the CYPS Strategy. Savings for future years have been, and will continue to be, set in train through extensive reviews of policies and services (which include ways of working and use of varied providers). Fundamental review work is currently at consultation stage on:

- Project 1 – Business Support and Administration
- Project 3 – Integrated Services
- Project 4 – Integrated Youth Support and Youth Service
- Project 5 – Quality and Improvement – School Improvement Functions
- Project 7 – Home to School Transport – Review of Discretionary Entitlements
- Project 10 – Outdoor Education

Savings are being achieved or planned through normal management processes under Project 8 (Procurement), Projects 12 and 13 (Staff and management productivity additional to other projects). Where more fundamental reviews are required in any of these areas, formal proposals will proceed through normal consultation procedures with staff, unions, parents, schools and partners as appropriate.

Savings required under Project 9 (Severance) and Project 15 (Maximising DSG headroom) have been, or are being, secured through consultation with professional associations, the Schools Forum and key local stakeholders as appropriate.

Public consultation is currently underway on proposed revisions to the home to school/college transport policy (Project 7). The consultation started on 4 October 2010 and concludes on 17 January 2011. The consultation covers three discretionary areas of the policy which are:

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- Transport for children to attend a school (other than the normal or local school) chosen by parents because they adhere to a particular faith (known as denominational transport)
- Transport for young people aged 16-19 with special educational needs to attend school or college
- Transport on an equivalent cost basis to a preferred school, that is, to a school other than the school designated as the normal or local school

These proposed revisions, together with further procurement efficiencies, will achieve a £1.6 million savings but the changes would also bring greater fairness and equity in transport provision, as the current policy gives additional entitlements to some pupils that others do not enjoy.

Proposals for Project 6 (Music Service) are pending, but are made more complex to complete at this point because of the Department for Education's decision to carry out a national review of its policy and funding.

### **Schools White Paper**

The Schools White Paper has been published and analysis is underway. A report will be made on the proposals and their implications as soon as possible. It is not easy at this stage to provide definitive comment since important accompanying proposals are still awaited in relation to funding and the Green Paper on Special Educational Needs, both of which overlap with some parts of the White Paper.

### **Academies**

To date we have received notice from four schools regarding potential application for transfer to Academy Status. It is understood from all four schools that their potential interest in academy status does not arise from dissatisfaction with the policies, services or approach taken by the County Council to its work with schools. It is difficult to comment at this stage on what might be the implications for other schools and for services provided by the Local Authority because there is still a lack of clarity about financial arrangements for academies in the future. As the principal interest on the part of a number of schools concerned, is apparently a financial one this is clearly something on which it is important to gain greater clarity from the Department for Education as soon as possible.

In preparation for possible academies in North Yorkshire we have begun work to ensure that all land, finance and service implications are understood. This work involves colleagues across the council in a number of Directorates and it will be necessary to charge for elements of this.

### **North Craven Review**

On 30 November the Executive considered a report seeking approval to publish statutory notices in respect of a reorganisation of school provision in North Craven. This followed an extensive consultation exercise carried out during October/November. The proposal involves the extension of the age range of the 11 primary schools and Settle College along with the closure of two middle schools in order to move from a three tier to a two tier education system. The Executive gave unanimous approval to publish statutory notices. They will be published on 16 December and there will be a further representation period of six weeks during which further objections or comments can be made. This closes on 17 January 2011. A final decision will be taken by the Executive on 22 February. If the proposals are agreed they will be implemented with effect from September 2012.

### **Upper Wharfedale Primary Review**

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The County Council is currently consulting on proposals to reorganise primary school provision in Upper Wharfedale. This involves four primary schools at Arncliffe, Kettlewell, Grassington and Threshfield. The consultation opened on 18 October and will close on 17 December 2010, having been extended for two weeks to allow further time for consultees to make a considered response. All the choices realistically available to us are likely to involve the closure of Arncliffe CE Primary School (where the number of pupils is now down to four) and will probably involve some change for Kettlewell also. It is unlikely that the review will result in there being no educational provision in Kettlewell. The Executive will be asked to take a decision on whether to publish statutory notices following the consultation exercise on 1 February. If statutory notices are published, a final decision on implementation of the proposals will be made in May 2011.

**County Councillor John Watson, OBE**  
**Executive Member for Schools**