

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

15 DECEMBER 2010

CORPORATE AND PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Budget Savings

1. We considered proposals for how the Chief Executive's Group, Finance and Central Services propose to deliver their contribution towards the County Council's budget savings over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15.
2. In essence, we thought that the areas identified for savings were the right ones. Reduced capacity will mean reassessing how central services prioritise input and support to partnerships. Elected Members should share their responsibility for budget savings and this means looking at mileage rates, expenses and responsibilities allowance for example.
3. Our intention is to undertake a post-implementation review of the budget consultation process focussing on how information was made available to Members - was it appropriate, adequate and could it have been improved.

NY Times

4. The Council invited the Committee to comment upon the future of NY Times. All options were considered, ranging from continuing with the publication as it is currently configured, through to its complete removal. Within these options, there are many opportunities to meet the Government's proposals around Council publications, make savings and continue to communicate with residents. Opinions differ on the relative merits of each approach, but a consensus did emerge in the Committee that retaining the current arrangement of 12 publications a year does not seem sustainable.
5. I expect to return to this debate early in the New Year but at this early stage the Committee's preference was that assessments be refined around a possible combination of options:
 - Reducing its frequency of circulation and continue to move towards on-line versions.
 - Changes to the print run and pagination; i.e., reducing the number of pages and the quality of the print.
 - A third option of exploring closer links with national newspaper groups who own the majority of titles within the County area.

6. There are drawbacks associated with reduced coverage but it would bring a closer relationship between local media and save costs. It also appears to meet the spirit and intention of the new code of practice, but until the outcome of the consultation is known, we cannot be certain of that.

Access to Services

7. A review on Access to Services will focus on community-managed resources, building community capacity; sustainable Broadband led transformation and the aspirations of the Big Society.
8. Long-term trends such as an ageing population and climate change will transform what our communities look like and what responsibilities they assume. At the same time, public services face an increase in demand and a rise in consumer expectation of service standards. Radical re-designs and innovative new models of delivery will be necessary.
9. This review is undeniably topical but with something so far-reaching in scope, the danger is we lose direction and focus. In short, our work must at the very least contribute to a greater understanding of:
 - Community initiatives in the context of the Big Society for the council, its partners for the community at large.
 - How NYCC reaps efficiencies around access to services whilst maximising the community benefit derived from a diverse approach.
 - How local decision-makers are going to devolve power and responsibility to others - ie how we empower communities to develop plans based upon local knowledge and shape places for themselves.
10. Our key aim is to highlight how NYCC currently and in the future might support communities to take responsibility for land, buildings and services transferred to them to deliver broad-ranging community benefits.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LIZ CASLING

Chairman

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall
NORTHALLERTON

1 December 2010

Background Documents: Nil