

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**16 February 2011**

**STATEMENT OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER  
(Corporate Services, Finance, Performance Management and Procurement)**

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES**

**Employee Issues**

The last couple of months have seen a significant increase in the level of restructuring and the consequential impact on staff.

Work is continuing to redeploy staff if at all possible, although this is obviously difficult where staff are in specialist or managerial level roles. Location is also an issue where there are no alternative roles within a reasonable travelling distance. Since I last updated Full Council there have been a further 5 staff who have left because they were in a redundancy position and we were unable to find them an alternative post, and there are currently 150 staff under notice of redundancy for which we are actively trying to find an alternative post to offer them.

The County Council continues to manage its workforce very carefully in these difficult times and there has only be one external advert in the last quarter (not including schools) and overall staff numbers continue to reduce month on month.

All areas of staff costs are being looked at in an attempt to make further savings. Discussions are ongoing with UNISON to look at all staff terms and conditions and entitlements in order to identify changes which will meet the savings requirement reflected in the budget papers ie £2m as a minimum. The usual industrial relations process will need to take its course. This will include UNISON balloting their membership on the management proposals in due course.

This and other information about the budget and the savings requirements are communicated to staff on a regular basis and are available on the intranet under the "Meeting the Challenge" section as well as through other staff communication. All staff are invited to give their views and provide other ideas for savings.

A number of staff processes are being moved online and automated over the next year. This starts on the 1 April with all staff receiving their payslip, submitting any mileage claims and submitting annual leave requests online. The new processes will be accessed by staff via the intranet from any computer.

These changes provide savings in relation to postage, printing, consumables as well as administration staff.

In addition the County has secured a timeslot in the national eCRB programme which will enable requests for CRB clearance to be submitted and managed online. This will result in savings, as well as reducing the average time for clearance from 6 – 8 weeks to an estimated 10 working days.

## **Information Technology Reminder**

Email is an integral part of the County Council's communication strategy and as such, I would like to remind all Members of their obligation to regularly read their email messages, and deal with accordingly.

Also, did you know Members have a dedicated telephone number for the ICT Service Desk, to allow calls to be prioritised? The number is 01609 533500 (extension 3500 if you are in County Hall). Please ring this number in the event of ICT equipment or system failure.

## **North Yorkshire Times**

Both the Executive and the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee have looked in-depth at the future options for NYTimes and ways of communicating with residents. We recognise that the current budget pressures faced by the council mean that we need to find a different way to inform and consult the population of North Yorkshire.

However, that does not mean that we shouldn't communicate at all, and the recommendations accepted by the Executive have been to trial a six-month partnership with local newspapers to provide public notices, whilst also providing editorial space in local papers throughout the county. This initiative not only meets our need to save money, but also ensures that we are still communicating with our residents, and fulfilling our statutory obligations.

NYTimes has been a great success in ensuring that we cost-effectively advertised staff vacancies and public notices, being the only single publication that reached every part of the county. However, with the decline in our recruitment and the current economic climate, we need to change the way we communicate and this new partnership – the first in the country -- will help to do that.

The success of the new arrangement will be reviewed and evaluated at the end of the period by my taking a report to the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## **Transparency**

In my last report I mentioned the preparations that were being made to meet the Government's Guidelines on Transparency. Most interest from the press and public has been in the requirement to publish information on items of expenditure over £500, on a monthly basis. The first report, in respect of expenditure during December 2010, was available before the deadline of the end of January 2011. In future this information will be available by the middle of each month in respect of expenditure during the previous month.

This information is only a part of the overall guidance on information to be made available under this Transparency initiative, and Members may wish to look at the dedicated webpage that has been set up to provide a single point of access to this information. This can be found at [www.northyorks.gov.uk/opendata](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/opendata)

Guidance has recently been received on how information on contracts should be made available and the intention is to develop further the information provided on our website to achieve the transparency sought. As part of the review linked to this work, it has been agreed that all contract quotation and tender exercises, other than those related to

individual packages of care, or SEN placements should be managed through our E Tendering system SCMS. By ensuring that potential suppliers are aware of this approach, this will help to provide a single point of information on the opportunities available to businesses and other service providers, for example in the voluntary sector.

## **Review of National Park Governance**

On behalf of the County Council, I recently responded to the Defra consultation on governance arrangements for the national parks. The purpose of the review is to look for ways in which the governance of the NPAs can be made more effective and more responsive to the concerns of their local communities.

In summary, the response said: "We strongly support the status quo with regard to the membership, both size and composition, of the Yorkshire Dales NPA and the North York Moors NPA. We believe that the current arrangements work well. Any change would be detrimental to all concerned and run counter to the second purpose of this review which is to look for ways in which the NPAs can be more responsive to the concerns of their local communities."

I am grateful for the contributions made to the development of the response by the County Council nominees to our two national parks and the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**4 February 2011**