

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 FEBRUARY 2011

### 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 current savings target. In relation to staffing, for example, it is likely that the overall reduction in numbers will exceed 250, but weighted so that management and strategic support services would reduce by a significantly higher percentage (probably exceeding 30%) than the frontline (possibly around 8%). Of the £19.47M savings target, nearly £13M relates to Directorate services, including potentially over £9M savings on staffing, of which around 60% will come from posts paid at £30K or above per year.

Public consultation on proposals to amend the **home to school transport policy - Project 7** - public consultation ended on 17 January 2011. The responses are now being analysed and the Executive will consider the outcome of the consultation on 22nd March 2011.

In relation to **Project 10 - Outdoor Education Review** – a restructured Outdoor Learning Service has been proposed from September 2011, following the withdrawal of the County Council's subsidy for Outdoor Education.

Consultation with schools took place with schools in the Autumn Term School Improvement Network meetings where considerable support for retaining the Outdoor Education Service was voiced. Subsequently Schools' Forum has supported this proposal with some funding from the Dedicated Schools' Grant.

The revised Outdoor Learning Service will retain the centres at Bewerley Park and East Barnby but will result in North Yorkshire no longer using the centres at Great Fryupdale and Humphrey Head. The service will retain the capacity to provide all North Yorkshire pupils with a residential outdoor learning experience but will also further develop outreach work with schools.

The proposed restructure will result in a reduction in staffing. Formal consultation with staff and unions on the proposals started following approval from Executive Members on 5th November. The 90-day consultation period ends on the 16th February. A number of constructive responses have been received from staff in the Outdoor Education service. A number of schools and individuals have also made comments following publicity around the proposals.

A report on progress with the consultation was received by Executive Members at their meeting with the Corporate Director on 11 February 2011.

#### Academies and Free Schools

Five North Yorkshire secondary schools have indicated their intention to apply for conversion to Academy status. They are Harrogate Grammar School, Harrogate High School, South Craven School, Skipton Girls High School and Norton College. These applications are subject to agreement by the Secretary of State and are at various stages of advancement. In the interests of balance, it is also appropriate to report that several schools have decided against pursuing Academy status at this time and that others retain a watching brief.

Statement - Portfolio Holder of Schools, 16-19 year old education, early years and youth provision - John Watson OBE9

Most of the attention tends to focus on the financial implications for schools and information made available by The Department for Education (DfE) is not always as clear as it should be. This is partly because the financial benefits vary from one Authority to another depending on local schemes of delegation. In North Yorkshire, where levels of financial delegation to schools have always been amongst the highest in the country, the financial gain to a school is much lower than in other places.

Additional funds to the school, excluding Special Educational Needs, amount to approximately 2% depending on the current school's budget. Only half of this will be recouped from the County Council's schools budget (the remainder is funded by the DfE). However, from these funds, the school will be expected to provide services such as Key Stage 4 additional costs, pupil support and welfare, behaviour support, school improvement and asset management. In addition the school will have to fund costs which will result from the school's decision to become an academy (such as additional finance and HR costs, insurance and any extra pension contributions) for which DfE provides a grant of £25K, but the actual costs of which they estimated to be £78K. The DfE is very keen to emphasise that there is no financial advantage in becoming an academy. In high-delegating authorities, the extra flexibility on using these funds will be more limited. Once the school has taken into account the additional responsibilities, the real "spending power" will be much lower than 1% of its total funding.

Reference is also sometimes made to Academies having freedoms from inspection (if they are 'outstanding') or to provide services to other schools. In practice, these freedoms are the same for Community, Controlled, Aided and Foundation Schools too, and North Yorkshire has been in the vanguard of using the services of some of its schools to support others as part of the Authority's own strategies for helping schools who need help.

It is widely recognised that North Yorkshire is a light touch, high trust Local Authority for schools, and has been so since changes introduced by the Education Reform Act 1989. The Secretary of State has begun to acknowledge where 'controls' need to be removed from schools; they are principally most imposed by national government.

One application has been made to open a Free School. The proposer is the Kinder Set Montessori School in Malton. The proposal is for a 108 place primary school to serve Malton and the surrounding area. The Secretary of State will take the decision on whether to allow the application to proceed and the County Council will be notified in due course.

### **School Organisation Reviews**

The statutory notice period relating to the **North Craven Review** ended on 27 January. The Executive will take the final decision on the proposals at its meeting on 22 February. If the proposals are implemented Ingleton Middle School and Settle Middle School will close on 31 August 2012 and Settle College would become an 11-18 secondary school operating on the current Settle College and Settle Middle School sites. The age range of the 11 primary schools in the area would be extended to offer primary education up to the age of 11.

At its meeting on 1 February the Executive decided to approve the publication of statutory notices in respect of the closure of Arncliffe CE VC Primary School from 31 August 2011 following a review of **primary provision in Upper Wharfedale**. The other three schools which were involved in the review (Kettlewell CP, Grassington CE VC and Threshfield) will remain unchanged.

The Executive also accepted a recommendation to cease to maintain **St Peter and St Paul RC (VA) Primary School, Leyburn** having received no representations or objections during the statutory notice period.

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