

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 February 2011

SCRUTINY BOARD

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Scrutiny Board met on Wednesday 26 January 2011. In the main the agenda composed of topics carried forward from the meeting on 1 December 2010 which was cancelled due to the bad weather.

Council Priorities – Briefing from the Chief Executive

Richard Flinton, Chief Executive, summarised the challenges facing the Council over the next 2 or 3 years. Top of his list was the budget situation, in particular, the need to save £40M next year. Richard highlighted how the situation is worse than originally was envisaged but commented that the intention is to make the additional savings without impacting on front line services any more than was described in the reports to the scrutiny committees at the turn of the year. Looking longer term Richard highlighted how the Council needs to protect front-line services by working more flexibly across directorates.

Richard also highlighted a range of developments that the Council will need to come to terms with such as Localism, changes in the NHS and forging links with schools that may opt for academy status. This led on to us recognising the potential for Members to engage with other organisations across the rest of the public sector.

In my view Scrutiny has an important part to play in supporting efforts to address the budget situation and to contribute to the broader changes impacting on the Council.

Proposed Joint County/District Scrutiny Members Event

Scrutiny Board have agreed to support a joint event with Scrutiny Members from across the sub-region to promote working together and to share information and learning. This will provide a valuable opportunity for Members to work together to share ideas and build on existing good relationships. Following discussion at the North Yorkshire & York Scrutiny Officer Network it is proposed that the event will be held in early autumn, to allow time for induction periods after the District Council elections in May 2011.

Scrutiny at Sub Regional/Regional Levels

I refer to the meeting I attended for Scrutiny Chairs from across the region in October last year. The purpose was to agree proposals to make to the LGYH Executive regarding regional scrutiny arrangements. All Members present

supported the principle of a Members Regional Scrutiny Network to share information, best practice and the outcomes of scrutiny reviews in order to make the best use of the scrutiny resources in the region.

Members also agreed that there could be opportunities for joint working, most likely on a sub-regional basis.

I will be attending a follow up meeting on 4th February 2011 and will provide a further update on this through my chairman's statement in May.

As I mentioned at County Council in December we should continue to focus on opportunities for sharing best practice and joint working on a sub-regional basis with the borough/district councils in North Yorkshire and with the City of York, rather than committing resources to regional scrutiny arrangements.

County Councillor John Blackburn
Chairman of Scrutiny Board
2 February 2011