

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 FEBRUARY 2011

**CORPORATE AND PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Residents Communications and NY Times

1. The Committee has considered this now on two separate occasions.
2. The first on 15 November when although we recognised NY Times many successes, support for continuing the current format was tempered by future financial challenges.
3. After looking at all alternative approaches, we reviewed three in detail:
 1. Reduction in frequency and moving to an online publication;
 2. Reductions in format and pagination; and finally
 3. Closer links with partnerships with Local Newspapers
4. Whilst each has merit, the latter strikes a balance between reducing budget spend and is a cost effective approach to meeting some of our public notice obligations.
5. Its limitations in terms of readership and coverage are a concern, but the more reassurances were given that content will be localised, the more support there was within the Committee for the proposed arrangement on the terms negotiated.
6. That said, there was strong support for continuing to seek and switch to online solutions, but we can only go at a pace that takes into account such things as equalities and the availability of broadband.

Citizen's Panel

7. The Executive asked the Committee to review the current Citizens' Panel. We weighed up the range of issues referred; assessed the panel's impact on service delivery; the contract terms and future requirements/options.
8. Our overriding conclusion was that the panel is a valuable resource but some small changes to practice were worth making
 - ❖ The number of surveys be reduced.

- ❖ Bearing in mind payment is per survey irrespective of content, we should maximise the opportunity to consult on as wide a range of subjects as is useful.
 - ❖ Rather than a series of surveys spread throughout the year, we should aim to time and dovetail their use better to the Council's needs.
 - ❖ Links with partners should be explored further, particularly the possibility of closer working with the Police.
9. Members observed that there appeared to be an absence of 'controversial subjects' consulted upon; the future of the Libraries Service is the most obvious example. Stronger corporate influence over Citizen's Panel consultation issues would address this.
 10. We would encourage moving to more online consultation because of the clear cost savings and efficiencies. Progress on that depends not just on the accessibility of broadband, but also the willingness of the people on the panel.
 11. Elected Member awareness of panel activity is limited because survey results and use is confined a small section of the regular Performance Monitoring Report to the Executive. Printing it separately would make it easier to assess the results, highlight successes and identify good practice. In addition, we could certainly improve Member influence over the direction of surveys and apply them more, for example, when we conduct reviews.

Defra Consultation on the Government Arrangements for the National Parks and Broads

12. The Government is reviewing the scope for improving the governance arrangements and accountability in National Parks. We believe that the current arrangements work well and any change would be detrimental to all concerned.
13. With regard to the proposals to change membership, after listening to representatives from both the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks we agreed with the County Council's position which supports the status quo.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LIZ CASLING

Chairman

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall
NORTHALLERTON

4 February 2011

Background Documents: Nil