

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20 JULY 2011

### STATEMENT OF RURAL SERVICES, WASTE DISPOSAL, PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT AND TRADING STANDARDS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LIBRARY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE

#### **WASTE AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES**

##### **National Waste Policy**

In June the Government published its review of Waste Policy in England and I am pleased to see that they have maintained the emphasis on diverting waste from landfill and securing value from waste through recycling and energy recovery. There is an increased role for anaerobic digestion, and encouragement to local authorities to provide capacity to treat locally arising commercial waste. Our proposed solution for the long term management of waste in North Yorkshire offers a perfect fit with the revised policies through our focus on separate treatment of organic waste through anaerobic digestion, and treatment of the remaining residual waste through energy recovery incineration.

##### **Waste Prevention and Performance**

I am pleased to report that we continue to increasing recycling and reduce the amount of waste that is sent to landfill. Our provisional figures indicate that last year we achieved the 45% national target for reuse, recycling and composting for 2015, that's is 4 years early. We also reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill by over 5% so that we now landfill only 55% of our waste.

Our waste prevention campaigns continue with a focus on organic waste composting and the reuse of household items and clothing. Textiles and food waste were two waste streams that the Government's waste policy review identified as having greatest environmental benefit by their diversion from landfill. We continue to work with volunteers to deliver much of this programme. This is another area that complements the Government's objectives by empowering individuals and communities, and encouraging social responsibility.

##### **HWRCs**

You will be aware that all of the household waste recycling centres in North Yorkshire are now closed each Wednesday. The savings from this reduction in opening times is an important element of the Council's overall savings plan. The closures are regrettable but do not change the high quality of service we continue to offer residents during the remaining 6 days each week.

I can also confirm that the construction of the new West Harrogate household waste recycling centre and highways depot is progressing well, and we are planning an official opening ceremony for the middle of October.

##### **Countryside Services**

Members will be interested in the Government's recently produced Natural Environment White Paper, which sets out the economic and social benefits of a healthy natural environment. The proposals in the White paper re-enforce the Council's countryside work and the County Council is well placed to benefit from the Governments proposed initiatives.

The White Paper recognises that sustainable economic growth relies on the benefits or 'services' provided by the natural environment and proposes to create a green economy. This mirrors the emerging visitor-economy priority of the new Local Enterprise Partnership and the huge contribution made to it through North Yorkshire's countryside.

## **INTEGRATED PASSENGER TRANSPORT**

Members will be aware that contracts for home to school transport services and local bus services are reviewed and renewed on a four yearly cycle. This year contracts in Ryedale and Craven are being renewed. An important part of the process is consultation with local members and parish councils. the consultation period closes at the end of July 2011. This is an opportunity to identify any issues with the existing network of services and I would encourage you to take advantage of it.

## **TRADING STANDARDS**

### **OPERATION VIOLET**

After an 18 month investigation conducted by North Yorkshire County Council Trading Standards and Planning Services, six members of a gang who deliberately and mercilessly targeted the elderly and vulnerable across the country for gardening and roofing work, including at least 20 victims in North Yorkshire, have been sentenced at Teesside Crown Court.

As the investigation developed, officers traced hundreds of payments into multiple bank accounts held by the gang and their associates. These payments were also identified as having been made by numerous elderly and vulnerable consumers throughout the Yorkshire & Humber region and across many other counties including Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire.

This process identified a number of repeat victims who had been visited by the gang over a number of months, paying them between £3,000 and £52,000. Expert examinations of the victim's houses and gardens revealed little, if any, work had been carried out. In the majority of cases false claims had been made about the need for work, what work had been carried out, how much the work would cost, the need for further work etc.

The family, believed to have netted hundreds of thousands of pounds, now face a financial investigation under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

## **LIBRARIES**

As of the beginning of July, Library and Community Services transferred across to the Chief Executive's Group. These services will work alongside of, and will form part of, the customer service/front office role for the County Council and further recognises the role that libraries play in delivering public access to a wide range on behalf of the County Council and other partners, including the District Councils. The move will assist in delivering the "One Council" approach by co-ordinating services delivered across the authority by Library and Community Services, including those of Registration and Archive Services.

Following the recent consultation on proposed changes to the Library Service, members will be aware that changes have been made to the original proposals and recommendations were made to, and approved by, the Executive on 14 June following deliberation at the Care & Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

on 8 June. This approach will ensure that library services are maintained directly by the County Council at 34 sites.

Libraries in key centres of population (the 18 identified in Category 1) will offer the full range of services but with fewer library staff and opening hours reduced from their current level, including no Sunday opening. Opening will need to be supplemented by increasing the use of volunteers, as well as increasing the number of groups and partners using libraries as their base or outlet. This already works successfully in certain areas; however, this model will be expanded further in the future.

Libraries in smaller market towns, areas of significant population and areas of social or rural deprivation (the 14 identified as Category 2) will have support towards accommodation, bookstock, IT facilities and broadband connectivity. They will also be provided with an element of staffing based in the library, albeit at a reduced rate than currently provided, and the Service has already begun to work with community groups and organisations in these areas in order to increase wider community participation in how services are delivered.

The Service is continuing to seek local solutions with partners and groups for eight libraries in unsuitable premises or in close proximity to the county's key centre libraries (Category 3). Discussions are taking place between relevant members, staff from across the County Council and local communities in an attempt to gauge the appetite for a community-led library. It is hoped that these discussions will result in positive proposals between now and the end of October. The Library Service will commit to provide regularly updated bookstock as well as training and advice from members of the professional library team for volunteers and partners where communities are able to demonstrate realistic plans for a community solution.

The cost of the current mobile service has been acknowledged as no longer sustainable, and this service will end in October. Many responses have already come forward, particularly from Parish Councils, with offers to provide library outlets in village halls, shops and pubs and, in some instances, villages are investigating the restoration of their "Reading Rooms". The County Council will also retain the supermobile to sustain provision in the most rural reaches of the county. Also, the Home Library and Information Service, which is run successfully by volunteers, will compensate further by ensuring that we continue to provide for elderly and disabled people unable to access the Library Service by any other means.

A further report will be considered by the Executive in November considering proposed opening hours and providing an update on progress relating to discussions with local communities in the eight Category 3 areas.

CHRIS METCALFE