

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20 JULY 2011

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

“THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE MORE WE CAN HELP”

Library Service

1. We have met twice to consider the future of the Library Service; on Wednesday, 11 May 2011 for the motion referred by the February County Council, and again on 8 June 2011 to review the Corporate Director's proposals.
2. At our first meeting we heard from the mover of the motion, County Councillor John Clark, who proposed some suggestions around the future scope and delivery of the Service. We heard also from the Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director.
3. After listening to the various points put forward the Committee believed that consideration of this issue was premature and therefore did not support the motion.
4. In June the public and other County Councillors expressed both their concerns about their library and their interest in the future of the service. The results of the consultation process, echoed in the comments we heard from the public at the meeting, show that people value their Library Service greatly. They especially like its diversity. Their comments tell us that the Directorate's commitment to a modern approach is appreciated. Members commented that the Option 2 proposals, whilst not universally popular, demonstrated that the Directorate had listened.
5. Discussion inevitably focussed in the main on the uncertain future of Category 3 Libraries and the mobile service. Members of the public and Councillors both sought reassurances that the outcome of these changes would not disadvantage some communities and users over others. Many people were concerned about the social and economic impact on their communities should the service no longer operate from a building in their village or town.
6. Views expressed suggest that in most people's mind, the case has been made for community support and volunteering to enhance the Library Service. Therefore, we welcomed the on-going discussions with all community groups, irrespective of the category of their Library.
7. Committee Members wanted this dialogue to continue. The Executive has since confirmed that NYCC is committed to offering expertise and advice so that community groups could see how and whether their aspirations could be realised through the preparation of business plans. This exercise must

include sensible challenge so that where an approach appears feasible, people can be confident about what is agreed will survive beyond the short-term.

8. The Committee reaffirmed its view that the aim must be to secure a modern library service that was sustainable for the future. We strongly believed that planning must take into account how changes to technology anticipated over the next five years will affect how communities and individuals access Library Services.
9. The Committee will return to this subject in November when final proposals are reported. In the longer term whilst this Committee may not be responsible for Libraries matters we believe it is crucial that an annual report is made to Members tracking progress.

Learning Disabilities Strategy / Valuing Employment Now (VEN)

10. Having completed its work in relation to VEN the Task Group was unable to report fully to our last meeting. It has reached conclusions about promoting employment for people with a learning disability. Known as 'Pathways to Employment' this will be taken at our September meeting alongside a much wider report on the changes to learning disability provision through a countywide strategy.

Raising Awareness on Welfare Benefits

11. We heard how changes to benefits affect some of the people we support to live independently and our ability to do that. More changes are on the way with the Universal Benefit Programme. It is important we understand the potential impact of the Coalition Government's welfare reform intentions. We intend to do this at the seminar guided by agencies involved in welfare advice and support.

Funding for Social Care

12. The potential implications of the recent Dinolt Report on the funding of social care which, amongst other things, recommends capping the amount of contribution towards residential care will be reviewed at our next meeting. We have knowledge in this area having responded to the previous government's consultation exercise.

County Councillor Tony Hall
Chairman
Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall
Northallerton

7 July 2011
Background Documents: None