

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

12 OCTOBER 2011

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES

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 which is committed to giving highest priority to frontline services, while acknowledging that the scale of savings needed means that they cannot be protected completely. In 2011-12 the CYPS MTF target as set by Budgets 1 and 2 is £9.150m. This target has been spread across 18 projects, plus turn-off projects funded by grants which have ended or been reduced.

Overall achievement is well on target at this stage. Indeed, as reported to Executive as part of the Q1 monitoring, it is likely that savings will be accelerated by up to £1m from later years, giving a cash benefit although the overall four year target does not change. The Directorate has set aside a specific MTF reserve to ensure that cash savings are achieved over the next four years. This is still the intention and these will be used in addition to the acceleration referred to above to ensure the maximum cash benefit for the Council.

This information appears in the Statements to Council for both Executive Members for the Children and Young People's Service as this reflects their joint responsibility for all the relevant resources.

Children and Young People's Plan

The Plan has been devised with partner agencies in the Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to maintain and improve outcomes for children and young people and to give them good prospects for the future. It is based on substantial assessment of need and extensive consultation with children, young people and parents. The priorities proposed reflect North Yorkshire issues and ambitions as well as any significant national requirements. The Plan takes full account of savings requirements, local and national policy changes, in order to target improvement in a sustainable way. It will be monitored by the Directorate, the Children's Trust and by Members to ensure it makes the intended impact.

Children's Social Care Transformation

The consultation period for Children's Social Care Restructure commenced on 5th September. There were 12 consultation events held around the county. Feedback overall has been very positive about the new model proposed for responding more rapidly to families and about the plans to reduce looked after children numbers by improving the impact of work with families. The consultation ends after 60 days on 3 November 2011 with a proposed implementation date of 1st March 2012.

National data published by the Department for Education recently confirmed that although the numbers of Looked After Children have increased in North Yorkshire over the last three years, the increase is only in line with national trends and the numbers per 10,000 (the national measure) in the County remain comparatively low. The DfE data also confirmed the improvement in performance on the completion of Initial and Core Assessments. These show that North Yorkshire was above the national average for the former and in line with the national average for the latter. These are significant improvements.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Consultation on a new SEND strategy has begun. Meetings for parents and carers have been arranged across the county between September and mid November. There will also be consultation with partners, agencies, schools and settings. The draft strategy, which will be reported to the full Council

early in the New Year, aims to improve assessment, decision taking and service planning through greater integration. It will also deliver the MTFs target savings figure of £525k by 2015.

Staff consultation has begun on a proposal to integrate the disabled children's teams with the SEN assessment and outreach services. The new service, to be operational from next March 2012, will be more efficient and better able help parents to navigate their way round complex systems to get the support which they need.

Consultation is also underway on a **Short Breaks statement**. A short break is an opportunity for parents and carers of a disabled child to have a break from their caring arrangements and for their disabled child or young person to have a positive, enjoyable experience in their free time. The statement sets out the range of short breaks services available to parents and carers, the criteria by which eligibility for services will be assessed and how the range of services is designed to meet the needs of families. The consultation ends in mid December.

County Councillor Carl Les
Executive Member for Children's Services

ADDENDUM TO ITEM 8 (d)

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

October 2011

STATEMENT OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Corporate Affairs, Performance Management)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES

Changes In Employment Legislation

There have been some important legal changes which NYCC as an employer has had to respond to:

a) Agency Worker Regulations - Introduced as of 1st October 2011 to provide equal treatment for agency workers with comparable employees. This increases the cost of agency workers by providing equal basic terms and conditions after 12 weeks of service NYCC has reviewed its use of agency staff and we are in a good position to positively manage agency use via an automated agency tracking and management system.

b) Default Retirement Age - Arrangements for the phasing out the Default Retirement Age (DRA) came in to force earlier this year meaning employers cannot use a DRA of 65 to dismiss staff under a compulsory retirement age. NYCC has adopted an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) of 65 to rise in line with the proposed changes to the State Retirement Age. This means staff will be compulsory retired and the justification for this, as required by the statute, relates to NYCC's need to continue to provide employment opportunities for young people. It is acknowledged that for some roles staff over 65 will remain due to the nature of those roles and the difficulty in recruitment, eg schools crossing patrol, midday supervisor.

Christmas Closure 2011

The first closedown of non-frontline County Council buildings in whole or part takes place on this year (Weds 28th - Fri 30th Dec), requiring staff not working in frontline roles to take, three days off using annual leave or flexi leave. Non service buildings are mostly empty at this time and closing buildings will save on light and heating costs. Essential service buildings will remain open, e.g. highways depots, registration offices, residential buildings and larger children's centres.

Pensions Update (Local Government Pension Scheme) LGPS – Employers submit proposals to Secretary of State

In addition to proposals for longer term structural changes to LGPS to take effect in 2015, the Local Government Group (the employers) and trade unions have been required by the Government to identify proposals by late September, which deliver short term savings equal to a 3.2% increase in employee contributions. Discussions have been ongoing at a national level over the summer. The fact that the LGPS is a funded scheme (it has assets to pay its pensions) means more options are available to deliver the savings than for other public sector schemes that are not funded.

Unfortunately it has not so far been possible to reach agreement between the two sides and the LG Group wrote separately to the Secretary of State on 21st September with proposals to achieve the required savings. flagging the importance of trying to balance

fairness and affordability to employees and affordability for the tax payer. The changes are recommended to take effect from April 2014 and the main elements are:

- No increase in employee contributions for scheme members whose full-time equivalent earnings are less than £15,000.
- An increase of 1.5% for those earning between £15,000 and £21,000. An increase of 2% to 2.5% for those earning over £21,000.
- Recognising that some employees may not be able to afford an increase in their contributions, an alternative choice for employees would be to maintain contributions at existing levels and have a lower rate of build up of pension from April 2014. Increase the normal age of retirement from 65 to 66 for benefits earned after April 2014 with benefits earned before then retaining a normal pension age of 65.

DCLG are considering these proposals and are expected to publish details of proposed changes they consider acceptable, which may be different to those proposed by the employers this month. There is then a 12 week consultation exercise for employers, trade unions and others to comment, during which time the LG Group and the unions intend to continue discussions.

Council staff are understandably concerned about any changes to their pension entitlement and particularly any increase in contributions in the current situation. As an employer we want staff to stay in the fund to ensure its continued sustainability.

There are different changes proposed to other public sector schemes including that for teachers and the unions nationally are organising a national day of action on 30th November. The County Council will prepare for this and do all it can to mitigate impact on customers and communities.

Update on Redundancies and Redeployment

Restructurings and staff reductions continue. The workforce (not including schools) has reduced to 5985 as of 30 September 2011, which now puts it at 2008 levels and is a 7% reduction on early 2010 level. We see a continued trend of a reduction of at least 100 posts a quarter. As a result of completed and ongoing restructurings nearly 400 posts have been removed and in other areas vacancies have been removed and fixed term contracts not renewed in order to reduce spend.

Of the 400 posts removed there have been 136 redundancies so far, but this includes some who worked a couple of hours a week and over 60 who did not want to be redeployed. We continue to work hard at finding and moving staff into alternative posts to assist them and minimise the redundancy costs for NYCC.

e-Newsletter

North Yorkshire Now, the council's new e-newsletter, has now been running for three months and has seen nearly 4,000 people sign up to receive it. Whilst not reaching all of our residents, the level of subscriptions is good in comparison to other local authorities. We know that those receiving the newsletter are then going on to read about the stories and get more information from the council's website, with the story on Broadband and the new adult education courses being the most popular following the first edition. Further work is underway to build up more subscriptions, and we will continue to monitor its demand and take up.