

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

15 February 2012

SCRUTINY BOARD

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

At Scrutiny Board on Wednesday 1 February 2012 we welcomed the Leader, John Weighell, and the Chief Executive, Richard Flinton.

John highlighted how his role has changed since the general election in 2010. In particular John referred to initiatives such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, Local Government North Yorkshire and York, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Leeds City Region all of which call for involvement at Leader level. Referring to the Council's apprenticeship scheme, John added that tackling unemployment amongst young people must be a priority for all partners.

Richard summarised how the Council is on track to deliver the planned £69m savings over the 4 years up to 2014/15 and how the One-Council initiative is a key part of that work. Richard also mentioned that the Executive will be recommending the Council opts to take the Council Tax Freeze Grant which amounts to £6.2M for 2012/13. We also heard that the localisation of Business Rates and changes to Council Tax Benefits will have a significant impact on the County Council.

In terms of strategic performance we noted that Council services have performed well in recent assessments/inspections by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. For instance Ofsted assessed the Children's Services as "performs well"; the assessment identified that the large majority of provision is either good or outstanding. A number of specific services have recently received national recognition such as the Archives Service, Registration Service and IT Service Desk.

The message was clear:

- the need to work in partnership is increasing, indeed in many cases we are the lead partner,
- local authorities' budgets will continue to be squeezed, and
- we need to be continually looking at we can improve performance.

I will leave it to fellow chairman to summarise the work of their committees but from my perspective I am confident that scrutiny is continuing play its part in helping the County Council come to terms with these pressures for change.

County Councillor John Blackburn
Chairman of Scrutiny Board

03 February 2012