

## North Yorkshire County Council 16 May 2012

### Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### Chairman's Statement

The Committee met on 4 April 2012 and the following items were considered:

1. Corporate Director's Update

The Committee were pleased to hear from the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services; David Bowe, that the Directorate savings plan had realised savings of £10.3m for the financial year 2011-2012. Some investment had been made; fitting trackers to County Council vehicles and £1.4m into the winter reserve. An additional £3.4m had been awarded to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) 'Growing Places' fund.

Mr Bowe advised us that a report is scheduled to be presented to the Executive for their approval on the allocation and utilisation of LEP funds. With the approval becoming part of the County Councils decision making process we did wonder if there might be a danger of decisions being 'called in' and stalling the process. However, as it is public moneys it is quite right that the allocation of LEP funding should be undertaken in an open and transparent way. The element of challenge in this instance is a good thing.

2. Economic Development

James Farrar the County Council's Assistant Director Economic and Rural Services outlined to the Committee the priorities for the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as; Access to Finance; Networks; Broadband; Skills; Visitor Economy; Agri-Food.

He advised us that the LEP has been awarded £9.4m in total for the 'Growing Places Fund' and this moneys would be focused on removing infrastructure barriers to create jobs.

We were disappointed to hear that the bid for the Rural Growth Network fund of £3.25m was unsuccessful but heartened to know that the LEP will still implement its programme with support from the private sector.

A key message that came out of Members comments and questions is the need for the District, Borough, County Councils and the LEP to work together and pool resources where possible.

3. Renewable Energy Policy: Proximity of Homes to Wind Turbines

Overview and Scrutiny is all about encouraging public involvement wherever possible so it was good to see two members of the public at our last meeting to make statements regarding the minimum separation distance for wind turbines.

It is important that we recognise that the County Council is not a local planning authority and therefore not usually the determining authority for windfarm development applications, but we feel it would be helpful if the County Council were to put forward a stance for the siting of on shore wind farms as we are a statutory consultee for larger developments.

We are recommending to the Executive (at their meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012) that any County Council policy around renewable energy should include the statement that:

*The County Council considers that there should be a presumption against commercial scale wind farms being developed within a two kilometre distance of residential properties.*

and

*That National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other protected landscapes, and their settings, are inappropriate for commercial scale wind turbine development given their intrinsic beauty and character.*

4. Update on the development of the Local Flood Risk Strategy

We were updated on the progress in developing the Local Flood Risk Strategy. As this is the first time we have had a comprehensive strategy it is important that the Committee remains engaged with the process. We understand that the Strategy will include; policy documents around the duty to investigate; the new powers regarding works affecting the water course; emergency planning and how we are working with partners. We want to see a strategy that is concise and simple to understand. We look forward to further updates on its development following consultation in Spring 2013.

5. In depth scrutiny review

Our next in depth scrutiny review is something in which I have a particular interest and is looking at the development of a protocol around Vehicle Activated Signs. We intend to involve; local area highway representatives; interested parish councils and the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations; North Yorkshire Police; North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service; Community safety partnership representatives in this work.

If you have any comments on Vehicle Activated Signs please do feed them into our review through our Corporate Development Officer; Lorraine Laverton.

The Task Group for this piece of work is: County Councillors David Jeffels, Michael Heseltine, Robert Heseltine, Mike Jordan and John Savage. The work will continue through the summer with a final report planned for our September meeting.

County Councillor David Jeffels  
May 2012