

North Yorkshire County Council**18 July 2012****Statement of Chief Executive Group Services Portfolio Holder****County Councillor Carl Les****Connecting North Yorkshire**

As Members will recollect, North Yorkshire was chosen as one of the four national pilots to deliver high speed broadband to rural areas. We have therefore been carrying out a detailed procurement exercise and we are now coming to the end of that procurement. An announcement on who has won the contract is therefore imminent and I may be able to provide a verbal update to the County Council.

This is clearly great news for both business and the wider public of North Yorkshire. It is not an exaggeration to compare this sweeping technological revolution to the creation of railways of the 19th Century or the development of air travel in the 20th. It will give a boost to the economy of North Yorkshire – helping small businesses to expand their markets and by attracting start up firms to where that has previously not been viable. In addition, people in rural North Yorkshire households will be able to enjoy online access in the same way as those living in cities.

The County Council is investing £25m in the scheme with funding coming from the Government and the European Regional Development Fund. It is anticipated that the successful bidder will broadly match that amount adding up to a total investment of around £50m. I anticipate that North Yorkshire will be the first pilot to award contract. This is a testament to our previous investment in the Public Sector Network and the creation of our wholly owned company NYnet. As a result of those previous investments and the approach we have taken, combined with the right skills and experience, we have been able to secure the necessary approvals from national government and from Europe. I believe that we are unique in that respect so North Yorkshire is truly leading the way in this field and we have good reason to celebrate.

One Council' Change Programme

Following consultation with the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny 'One Council' Task and Finish Group, the Executive, on the 22nd May 2012, considered and approved an overall Programme Plan which moved the programme from a 'development' to 'implementation' phase. Progress continues to be made across the workstreams to deliver the cultural and financial benefits. One recent key milestone to note is that the management of the business support and administration function across the Council was transferred to the Chief Executive's Group on 1 July 2012, under the responsibility of the Assistant Chief Executive, Human Resources and Organisational Development. A series of monitoring arrangements are in place to track progress over the life of the Programme.

Community covenant grants

The County Council is acting as accountable body for local organisations applying to the Military of Defence Community Covenant Grant programme. This programme aims to support local projects that strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the armed forces community and the wider community in which they live.

Decisions are made nationally by the MOD. Grants approved to date in North Yorkshire include:

- £159k - new scout head quarters and community centre in Bedale
- £30k - Homestart - support for families with young children in the Catterick area
- £27k - Catterick Voices - oral history project
- £20k - Swaledale Mountain Rescue - new vehicle
- £29k – Brompton-on-Swale school - floodlighting for multiplay area
- £150k - Richmondshire RUFC - new changing rooms
- £31k - Hipswell Church of England Primary School - play area and outdoor classroom
- £5k - Foxglove Covert - equipment for maintaining nature reserves
- £169k - Army Welfare Service - improving playgrounds in Catterick Garrison area

Further information and the application is available on www.nypartnerships.org.uk/ccgrant

Workforce Update

The end of the financial year saw the culmination of a number of staffing issues;

- The final set of terms and conditions changes were introduced for staff to deliver £2m savings. These changes from April 12 included the removal of overtime pay, 2 day unpaid leave equivalent to 0.7% pay cut, the reduction of pay protection to 1 year where staff are moved to lower graded posts, and changes to the staff incremental pay arrangements.
- A further reduction in spend on staff payments other than basic salary of £2.8m partly due to reduced and changed staffing and working arrangements. This covers payments such as for weekend and night working, on-call / standby and sleeping in duties.
- An outstanding position on staff absence with a reduction of 0.6 days lost per employee to provide an outturn for 11/12 of 6.5 days lost. In some directorates the drop was over 1.5 days and over 45% of staff working for NYCC for the full year did not have any absence. This position and the continued low absence level during the first quarter helped contain staff costs in terms of cover needed for front line roles. Notably the spend on agency staff for 11/12 was some £400k less than the previous year and the spend on overtime some £220k less.
- Staff numbers continue to reduce with figures now at 2007 levels and a workforce reduction of some 8% since 2010.

Council staff will be affected by the changes to their terms and conditions in terms of receiving less pay, particularly when this is considered alongside the lack of a pay rise for the last 3 years. In view of this and in recognition of how hard council staff continue to work to deliver good services and help NYCC deliver significant savings the Executive has responded to the National Employers side in support of a national pay award for staff for 13/14 at an affordable level .

Communication

The 6 month newspaper pilot with Johnston press concluded this month. In view of the initial evaluation the Executive have extended the arrangement for a further 6 months pending the outcome of a national decision on public notices and further evaluation. The council remains disappointed that this arrangement is not able to extend to other media groups but will continue investigations with them