

North Yorkshire County Council**18 July 2012****Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee****Chairman's Statement****Post Offices**

- 1 Senior representatives from Post Office Ltd. attended our meeting last month to give an overview of the changes to be made to the branch network in the next two to three years. They also explained about the partnership arrangements being put in place with some local authorities to deliver face-to-face council services in branches (cash collection, form checking, ID checks, processing applications etc.)
- 2 6,000 of the network of over 11,500 branches in the UK will be converted to new style 'local' and 'main' formats. Whilst there are no planned branch closures what we are likely to see in North Yorkshire are some post offices being relocated within a local area. This is because post office locals and mains will be situated in retail outlets. Sub-postmasters will not be forced to go into the scheme and those that don't will retain their current operating model.
- 3 Some of the pilots of post office locals have raised issues with regards to the quality and consistency of service provision, and it's hoped that these will be addressed speedily. Customers using post office locals and mains will have the benefit of much longer opening hours. But it's important that the Post Office provides a two-way communication channel for customers to provide their feedback on the changes and for the Post Office to respond to any concerns. Members could play a central role here by communicating back customer issues to the Post Office.
- 4 The Committee welcomed the fact that the Post Office is committed to ensuring the financial and commercial stability of the network: moving away from its dependency upon government subsidy by securing new business. Although opportunities for partnership working between the Post Office and the County Council have been looked into in the past, this will be re-examined in the coming months by officers. And I have asked the post office representatives to report back on progress at our Mid Cycle briefing meeting in December. Overall, we were pleased to hear that the Post Office genuinely wants to learn from its past mistakes and move forward.

One Council

- 5 Our One Council Members Task Group will be meeting with the Chief Executive this month to get his insight into how the One Council programme is progressing and his future plans for the overall design of

the organisation. We will also be discussing our observations about the design and implementation of the programme to date. I should have more to report by the time of the County Council meeting.

Procurement

- 6 The Committee received the annual procurement report and was interested to note the work of the Regional Procurement Group in exploring the potential for new collaborative arrangements.
- 7 In principle collaboration is a good idea but we also need to ensure that in practical terms we are getting a good return. We were pleased to note therefore that part of the role of the Regional Procurement Group will be to make sure that collaboration focuses on the bigger ticket items.
- 8 The County Council continues to subscribe to an external spend analysis service and has access to equivalent spend in other authorities. Not all expenditure is analysed in this system so we have asked for expenditure paid through the CHAPS bank transfer system to be included in future. This will provide a more complete picture of procurement-related spend.

County Councillor Liz Casling Chairman

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall
Northallerton

4 July 2012

Background Documents: Nil