

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

10 October 2012

**STATEMENT OF THE FINANCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER
(Financial Services including Assets, IT and Procurement)****COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN WATSON OBE****The Council's performance against budget in 2012/13**

On the face of things we were £21 million ahead of budget at the end of the first quarter, 30th June. That is however a misleading figure. Although there was indeed a small true saving against our intended expenditure, most of the £21 million headline figure was made up of other factors. The commitments brought forward from the previous year amount to £8 million. The (admittedly rather complex) arrangements for the Pending Issues Provision gave us an apparent benefit of £4 million. In addition we received a £3 million windfall in respect of Academies' funding. Several other elements of "earmarked" funding make up the remainder.

It is, frankly, just as well that the Council has started the year in such a strong budgetary position. The recent floods have caused widespread damage for which the Council will be responsible. Some compensation will be available through the Government's "Belwin" scheme but the majority of the repairs will need to be funded by the Council itself. I hope to have an estimate by the time of the Council meeting itself.

NYnet

The contract with BT for the Connecting North Yorkshire Broadband project is now in place and will be managed on behalf of NYCC by NYnet. NYCC is the only authority in the country that has all the necessary state aid and grant approvals, as well as concluding a procurement process.

The project has now been branded as Superfast North Yorkshire (SNY) and was launched at a conference held at Fountains Abbey on 29 September in collaboration with Julian Smith and other local MPs. NYnet has put a project team in place to manage the roll out with BT and this will be organised on a true partnership basis with staff of both NYnet and BT co-locating at the NYnet offices in Roecliffe.

Superfast North Yorkshire will bring speeds above 25 MBs per second to 90% of all properties in the County. The remaining 10% will receive between 2 MBs and 25 MBs per second with most receiving well above the 2 MB level.

Details of the order in which communities will be connected (and the levels of service they can expect) will be published when the current survey work has been completed – and that is expected to be before Christmas.

The roll-out must be finished by December 2014.

In addition to the Broadband project, NYnet is also taking the opportunity to refresh its existing network for the public sector (including schools). The renewal will utilise the SNY network as this is rolled out and, as a result, significant cost savings will be achieved in due course.

Update on Systems and Data Matters

The Microsoft Project, involving the roll-out of the Windows 7 desktop operating system and associated software continues with over 1,000 devices already migrated. This roll-out will continue to February 2013. There has been positive feedback both on the training provided and the improved usability from those users that have had their devices migrated.

A review of the retention period of emails and files and how this can be managed and implemented in future is to be discussed by the Corporate Information Governance Group. The aim is to reduce the amount of data that has to be stored and backed up which will assist in the delivery of the expected savings in storage costs.

As part of ongoing work, we have already seen a reduction in the number of packaged applications in use across the authority from over 1,400 prior to the start of the Microsoft roll-out to around 500 now. Further work on the reduction and standardisation of reporting and mapping products is continuing to save money on licence costs. One of the key aims is to ensure that where possible existing applications are used to meet new system requirements and reduce the number of new applications introduced. This has been done through the re-use of Lagan and SharePoint for the Information Governance Incident reporting and Violent Warning systems.

Work continues to investigate a number of innovative ideas that will exploit current technology and improve the authorities capability to deliver mobile and flexible working.

Credit Union

The North Yorkshire Credit Union has been experiencing difficulties and has therefore been in dialogue with the County Council and other partners. We are currently working with the North Yorkshire Credit Union and others in order to ensure that we have a sustainable Credit Union offer within the County. Over the coming weeks we are likely to reach a fuller view about the role of the County Council so an update will be brought at the relevant time to Members.

Update on Procurement Matters

Work is nearing completion on the evaluation of tenders for the new Procurement Services contract. I hope to be in a position to update you verbally on this at the Council meeting.

Update on Property Matters

Discussions are underway to transfer **Sharow View** to the Ripon Museum Trust. Ripon CVS will retain its ownership of Community House but has withdrawn its interest in Sharow View. It is anticipated that the Museum Trust will be seeking grant aid from bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. Existing occupiers eg Citizens Advice Bureau and Health and Adult Services staff will remain in the building although in the medium term, NYCC will be expected to vacate the building.

The community group, I-Hope, is seeking to take over the buildings of **Ingleton Middle School** and is working up its business plan. It has been asked to demonstrate that it has firm interest from potential occupiers by mid October. The group was successful in securing a conditional offer of £45,000 from the Big Lottery Fund.

Reports will be brought to the Executive on both Ingleton Middle School and Sharow View later this year.

A proposal to **refurbish East Block** will be presented to Executive shortly. The proposals present a viable business case to refurbish office accommodation on the County Hall campus, improving the longevity of buildings, allowing them to be used more intensively and enabling the rationalisation of the estate by disposing of other buildings.

More generally, on property initiatives, work is progressing well with colleagues in directorates to develop the single approach to property. Proposals to rationalise the County Council's estate in Scarborough are being worked up and policies towards supporting the increase in levels of flexible working are nearing completion.

John Watson
1 October 2012