

North Yorkshire County Council

10 October 2012

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee**Chairman's Statement****North Yorkshire Police**

- 1 Assistant Chief Constable Iain Spittal from North Yorkshire Police attended our committee meeting last month. He provided us with an excellent overview of the Force's current performance in relation to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and crime; the work being undertaken to ensure faster response times to incidents in both rural and urban areas; the changes made to the Force's structure; and the ongoing financial challenges that it faces.
- 2 Anti-Social Behaviour, overall crime and the number of Killed and Seriously Injured on our roads have all continued to decrease over the past 16 months. Whilst the number of police officers in North Yorkshire has and will continue to be reduced over the next few years, we were pleased to hear that over 80% of incidents requiring an immediate response are meeting the target times for urban areas and rural areas. This is an improvement on previous years' figures. Like us, North Yorkshire Police are trying to ensure that in spite of the budgetary pressures that they face, the public do not see a reduction in the quality of the service that they receive. We were told though that it's likely that the Force will need to put in place additional measures to meet the projected funding gaps in its budget from 2014/15 onwards.
- 3 Iain Spittal acknowledged the importance of not losing sight of the need to involve and consult with the public. As a Committee we noted that although the Safer Neighbourhood groups provide a forum for the public to meet with the Police, they should not be relied upon as the only way of listening to people's concerns and issues. So we were pleased to hear that the Police are using other ways of communication to engage with the public, for example by using surveys and social media.

Social Media

- 4 It's clear that social media is not a passing fad. There are risks associated with the use of social media but, if used appropriately, it can provide a credible and cost-effective communications channel to complement more traditional methods of communicating with the public. Furthermore, new regulations have come into place in relation to local authority meetings and access to information, which amongst other things make it easier for social media reporting of council meetings - opening proceedings up to internet bloggers, tweeting and

local news forums. The changes are intended to result in greater public scrutiny.

- 5 With all of the above in mind I arranged for the Committee to receive a presentation from the Head of Communications on the Council's use of social media and potential ways of expanding its use. Cllr. Mike Jordan also kindly provided us with a practical demonstration of the benefits to Members of using social media and having a webpage. He showed that it provides Members with another tool to communicate with their electorate, allowing them to reach a wider audience than just relying upon leaflet drops, surgeries, newsletters etc.
- 6 We discussed the pros, cons of social media and I appreciate that 'tweeting' etc. is not everyone's cup of tea! However for those interested in knowing more I have asked for all Members to be given the opportunity to have some practical training on the range of social media available, including setting up a webpage. The training is likely to take place at the start of the next Council to allow any new Members to be included.

One Council

- 7 Our One Council Members Task Group has met to scrutinise the first of the programme's monthly highlight reports, including the risk register. We have also received a progress report on the Customer Access Workstream and the Behaviour & Skills Framework and 'The Role of the Manager', which is being developed under the Management and Supervision workstream.
- 8 At our meeting in November we will be reviewing the progress made in relation to some of the 'customer journey' implementation plans within the Customer Access Workstream ('I want to live independently' and 'My child is starting school'). We will also be discussing the Draft Internet Strategy, which when implemented should make it easier for customers to be able to find information quickly and carry out more on-line transactions. The draft Management Framework developed under the Management and Supervision Workstream will also be brought to the meeting.
- 9 Notes of our Task Group meetings are circulated to all Members on the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee but if other Members would like to receive copies let me know.

County Councillor Liz Casling Chairman

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall
Northallerton

26 September 2012

Background Documents: Nil