

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 20 February 2013

### TRANSPORT, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

#### Chairman's Statement

My Chairman's statement for this full council includes details of the Committee meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013. The meeting focussed on the forthcoming budget as well as an overview of economic development.

#### **Additional Budget Savings Required in 2013/14 and 2014/15.**

The Corporate Director for Business and Environmental Services; David Bowe gave a full overview of how the Directorate would achieve the savings required. We were encouraged to hear that the savings of £4.7m could be met and we sincerely hope that there will not be a knock on detrimental effect on the quality of service provided.

There was an extremely full discussion around the performance of Ringways; the County Council's highway maintenance providers. There was a mixed reaction from Members with some feeling that the company were doing very well whilst others were vehement in their displeasure with them. Both Dave Bowe and the Executive Member present County Councillor Chris Metcalfe were keen to hear of the detail of any problems and felt it might be one of poor communications rather than a problem with the quality of work. They assured the Committee that they would arrange a meeting with the Managing Director of Ringways to discuss any problems and ensure they were addressed. I offered to also attend this meeting once it is arranged with a view to inviting the Managing Director to a future Committee meeting.

#### **Economic Development**

The bulk of the meeting was focussed on Economic Development as the Committee has a keen interest in this across the County. We were interested to see how economic development is addressed across the County Council and the county in general. This meeting focussed particularly on the Local Enterprise Partnership, Highways and Procurement.

As always James Farrar the Assistant Director of the Economic Partnership Unit gave an excellent presentation that had the Committee enthralled. He started by taking us through the international and national economic picture before looking more closely at what is happening in our area....Which as we found out ..is a lot!! We talked about; small business growth with over 1,300 businesses supported and plans to have 1 – 1 business mentors with 73 mentors attracted already. We went on to discuss major growth opportunities particularly around potash mining in the Whitby area, development of the underused site at Sandhutton that is currently sole use of the Food & Environmental Research Agency but with potential for campus development in science and innovation as well as agri-food innovation, the future plans at Drax power station as a producer of bio-mass energy and the future plans to provide carbon capture and storage facility. Of course the one opportunity that has captured the imagination of many, especially the cyclists among us is the Tour de France. Welcome to Yorkshire will be leading the work in this area but the LEP is a key partner and intends to support rural businesses around the route to maximise the potential for income. It is important of course while we have those extra visitors to our area to encourage them to come back and enjoy the wider county.

Barrie Mason the Assistant Director for Highways and Transportation gave a presentation that demonstrated how the Local Transport Plan, the Local Plans (formerly Local Development Framework), Local Sustainable Transport Fund, the Infrastructure Delivery Steering Group all worked together with the Local Enterprise Partnership and encouraged a pro-economy mind set. We agree that economic development is a role for all of us across the County Council and not just the LEP and the Economic Partnership Unit.

Finally Geoff Wall the Assistant Director Central Finance took us through how the County Council's procurement activity supports the economy of North Yorkshire. He advised us how we let local businesses know what we want to buy and what other engagement activity takes place; this includes working with partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and the North Yorkshire Forum. We also work with the District Councils to put on 'Doing business in North Yorkshire' events. Of course it is always useful to remember that as well as giving business to local business where we can, many of our services are provided by local people even if the employing organisation is not located here. This, importantly, keeps employment and earnings in the local economy.

### **Looking ahead**

The final meeting of the Committee in this current County Council is scheduled for the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013. Our agenda is comprised of another look at economic development particularly at skills, apprenticeships and broadband. We also have update reports on the flooding strategy and street lighting and then we will find ourselves in the throes of a local election!!

County Councillor David Jeffels  
February 2013