

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

24 July 2013

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN WEIGHELL

Spending Review Announcement

On 26 June the Chancellor announced the Spending Review which, amongst other things, set out anticipated public sector funding for 2015/16. We were braced for further significant reductions in Government funding but it was slightly worse than anticipated. Local Authority funding is to be reduced by 10% (£11.2m) in real terms in 2015/16 and there is a prospect of further top slicing as the Government launches consultations on a number of other grants.

We don't yet know the precise finance settlement for the County Council but we are hoping that the government announces the settlement for 2015/16 at the same time as that for 2014/15. Normally we would expect this in late November / early December but there is already an indication that this may occur as late as the new year. The Budget report that is considered elsewhere on the agenda for the County Council proposes how we make sure that we are in a sound financial position for the next 20 months. The challenge thereafter is how we deliver the necessary changes and savings in 2015/16 and beyond. We know already that this will be a huge challenge for the County Council, and all councils across the country.

Tour de France

Arrangements for the 2014 Tour de France Stages 1 and 2 are progressing with the final detailed route announced in October. A Board has been set up in the region to organise and to oversee the financial arrangements for the Tour under the Chairmanship of Sir Rodney walker. The Board consists of representatives from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Sport England, British Cycling and Welcome to Yorkshire, The Leader of Leeds City Council and myself, the police and other agencies are also members of that Board. Whilst the costs of staging the Tour are going to be considerable the benefits are likely to be very large indeed. The economic benefits of the last time the Tour was in this country were estimated at over £100m and with the expert publicity being generated by welcome to Yorkshire it is expected the benefit to the economy of the region will be immense with North Yorkshire being one of the largest beneficiaries.

Local Enterprise Partnership

The recent spending round announcement included a significant boost to the position of the Local Enterprise Partnerships. There was a creation of a national pot, which is made up from existing funding plus the top slice of new homes bonus and the relocation of various transport funds. LEPs are therefore being drawn more and more into the area of infrastructure delivery, traditionally the responsibility of local government and these new developments will require close cooperation between councils and LEPs if they are to be successful. In addition to these announcements Mark Prisk a Minister within Communities and Local Government has written to the Chairman of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP to state that for any council area to move out of existing LEP geography requires the agreement of all effected LEP Chairmen. Therefore the government still recognises York as being included within the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP. This is an interesting development given that York City Council gave notice to withdraw from the LEP, and I hope that they will now be able to fully re-engage with councils in north Yorkshire and East Riding.

York University

I attended the farewell evening for the Vice-Chancellor of York University. Brian Cantor has held that position for 11 years and during that time has made York one of the world's best Universities. He has also been a good friend to Local Government in the Region taking part in a number of Committees and Boards which has been extremely useful. I wish to place on record my appreciation of Brian's help and expertise over the years.

Shared appointment with Selby District Council

At the time of writing this statement there has just been a successful conclusion to the interview process to recruit to the shared position of Chief Executive of Selby District Council and Assistant Chief Executive of North Yorkshire County Council. There was a strong range of candidates and the position has been verbally offered and accepted and is subject to formal confirmation of Selby District Council in respect of the Chief Executive aspect of the post. This confirmation is due to take place 16 July and I will be able to verbally update Members at County Council of the successful candidate. This is an important step in our project to work closely with Selby District Council and I am sure there will be now added impetus on how we move forward together.