

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

24 July 2013

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES**Business Support**

The restructuring of business support is on-going. This affects nearly 700 staff and consultation finishes at the end of the month, with implementation for 1st November. The restructured service will look quite different at a managerial level, as it brings together the previously separate directorate and service admin and business support teams under managers for geographic areas. It also centralises a number of business support functions, notably Finance Admin, Document Management and Safeguarding minute taking/Admin under single management structures. In addition to restructuring staff, a number of processes and working arrangements have been changed to deliver savings on consumables. This along with the staffing changes will result in a saving of £1.5million initially with more planned from 14/15 onwards as the introduction of new systems and new ways of working reduces the need for admin resources. The staff savings have been achieved mainly through the new geographically based management structure which reduces the number of managers and supervisors needed. There has also been some reduction in standard admin staff numbers which has been achieved by holding and removing vacancies thereby minimising the need for redundancies.

Update on County Council ceilings

During the Jacobs annual condition survey of the Brierley Building, cracking of the plaster was observed in the Members Dining Room and subsequent inspection of the ceilings to the first floor of the building identified further cracking to a number of ceilings. The rooms identified as potentially unsafe were taken out of use. Jacobs were then commissioned to carry out a detailed investigation into the condition of the plaster ceilings and make recommendations for the remedial work required.

A three phased plan was agreed with Jacobs to survey all ceilings in the Brierley Building and this has been underway during the past few months. Phase one concentrated solely on the Members Dining Room, as a pilot.

In Phase two, after visual inspections of all rooms, it was decided to commission full structural surveys of all rooms except the North (finance) Corridor. This found that all rooms in the East (Meeting rooms) – with the exception of the Grand Meeting Room – and South (Members) corridors, and in the 3 rooms next to the canteen corridor, require structural work. No such required work has been identified in the West (HR) corridor.

Phase three will consist of a full survey of the remaining finance corridor. The visual inspection showed no deterioration of plaster here and survey dates are to be agreed once any phased works have started.

All rooms where work is required have been vacated, although the Chairman's room, Meeting Room 4 and the ceiling above the entrance to the canteen corridor have had temporary under-boarding works. This has made the ceilings safe and these areas are now back in use.

A full survey has taken place on the Members Dining Room, and this notes that all works will be subject to receiving Listed Building Consent and the appointment of a competent contractor. Specific recommendations have been made regarding the type of plaster to be used.

A specialist plaster survey has been booked in for the 17-19 July. This will look at all rooms to check the extent to which plaster will have to be removed as part of any structural work. Once this has been done we will be in a position to identify potential costs and therefore recommend the way forward including timescales and necessary procurement.

I will ensure that Members are kept up to speed and can I thank Members and staff for the constructive way in which they have dealt with this inconvenience.

Revised Quarterly Performance Reporting Arrangements

For many years now the County Council has operated a quarterly reporting system which has consisted of a suite of information on key performance indicators, workforce, revenue budget, capital plan and treasury management activity. This has served us well over the years as evidenced by our consistent levels of good performance and our sound financial management. Nevertheless, the current times call for different arrangements and a different emphasis.

A consolidated report will still be brought to the Executive and shared with Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the usual quarterly cycle. It will, however, look to provide a more complete picture of the key services that the County Council provides. Some of the information will remain largely unchanged as it is clearly necessary to ensure good monitoring of the budget, capital plan and our workforce. The way in which we review performance though will try to pull together all of those elements and provide a more comprehensive view of the County Council's business.

The first of these revised reports will be reported to the Executive on 20 August and I would welcome feedback from Members.

One Council Change Programme

The One Council Change Programme started in 2011 and was tasked with delivering £7.644m of savings per annum. We are now 2 years on and very much into the "implementation" stage. Whilst a small element (£76k or 1% of the target) is yet to be identified, the majority of cashable savings are well on track. This is, of course, in addition to the cultural benefits and we do indeed see increasing cases of good collaborative working across the council.

In recognition of the advanced stage of much of the Programme it has been decided that all workstreams, with the exception of "Customer Access" and "Strategic Support" will move to "business as usual". This approach has been discussed with the Corporate and

Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This is not the end of the One Council Programme but merely a reflection that implementation is largely on track and the One Council principles and lessons are being used in order to shape the next stage of the Council's development as we face greater financial pressures.

Revenue Budget

County Council are considering a report on the Revenue Budget elsewhere on the agenda. The Leaders statement also highlights the Chancellors Spending Review. I would therefore draw Members attention to those particular items.

New Committee and e-Governance System

Legal and Democratic Services are about to introduce a new system that will help to streamline the way in which we administer Committees and other related democratic activity. I thought it would be helpful to give Members a quick summary.

The Council will be implementing a new committee and e-governance system by the autumn, which will be accessed via the internet. This externally hosted solution will:

- Automate the production of agendas, reports and minutes based upon pre-populated templates;
- Enable oversight of the report production process to achieve better coordination and improved compliance with report authorisation and deadlines;
- Enable easier navigation of the website for example, from a Councillor's web page, to the committees on which they serve, to the meeting papers;
- Provide a subscription service for those who wish to be alerted when particular topics are to be addressed at meetings;
- Display the Members' Register of Interests, with appropriate details published on each Councillor's web page, with the facility for members to update these records themselves, if required;
- Have the ability to offer an e petitions facility enabling community groups to initiate petitions hosted on the authority's website, if required;
- Enable the remote administration of the system by Democratic Services staff enhancing service continuity provision;
- Enable the decommission of outdated and unstable software, whilst making working practices more efficient and streamlined, mitigating reduced staffing levels.

Relevant briefings / training will be provided for Members at the right time.

CARL LES