

## North Yorkshire County Council

24 July 2013

### Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### Chairman's Statement

My Chairman's statement for this full council includes details of the Committee meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013. This was the first meeting of the new committee following the County Council elections. The meeting focussed on an update and final report on the One Council programme, property performance and a review of the newspaper partnership as well as a regular report from the Executive member County Councillor Carl Les.

#### 1. Executive Member's Progress Report

Members welcomed County Councillor Les to the meeting and were pleased to receive his summary report that outlined key areas of work of interest to the Committee. It was reassuring to know that the arrangements for repairs to the ceilings in the meeting rooms of the Brierley building were progressing but we understood that as this is a listed building it is not a straightforward repair.

We were very interested to hear about the opportunity to look at options for a 'paperless' environment for County Councillors and it was good to hear from Committee members who are also Scarborough Borough Council members that the move to using 'tablets' was proving successful at the Borough Council.

Cllr Les did suggest that 'Community Budgets' might be an area of work the Committee might like to look at more in depth. Our next in depth scrutiny review is something we will look to identify at our next Committee meeting

The use of video conferencing facilities for briefings was also considered and members agreed that where appropriate all efforts should be made to use them in order to reduce costs and travel.

#### 2. One Council

Simplify, Standardise & Share, these are the key principles of the One Council programme we were told. Although the programme has reached the end of the initial stage implementation continues the three key principles will run through everything the County Council does in the future.

The Committee are keen to see that the County Council makes the best use of its property portfolio and this is something we hope to look at again in the future.

#### 3. Property Performance

The Committee were advised that the key areas of work now and in the future include; a review of the property portfolio so it meets future requirements, a review of the way we manage property, the end of the Jacobs contract and looking to future contracts and savings.

The report informed us that Jacobs had again met or exceeded its performance targets, that all of the estates management targets have been met or exceeded (apart from one, the negotiation of a reduction in rent or licence fees compared to the landlords starting offers) and client satisfaction with the quality of service of our contractor remains high. The Committee were pleased that the report was such a positive one but reminded officers that there is a need to ensure that quality assurance of completed works is undertaken. There is evidence that there are some

poor examples of works and although that may not be many in number it is important that all our customers both internal and external have a quality product.

#### **4 Review of the newspaper partnership**

The report asked for our views on the current newspaper partnership with Johnston press. The current partnership provides for one page of content, provided by the Council, usually consisting of six news or feature items, related to the area. We were advised that circulation figures are down and our own experience shows that newspaper readership appears to be moving away from paper copies and onto the internet. We do feel it is important to keep a range of communication channels however so that we can reach different audiences so for the time being our opinion is that the partnership should be allowed to continue but that it should be reviewed again in 12 months time.

#### **5 Work programme**

The future work programme of the Committee was discussed and the items listed within it agreed without amendment. I have asked my colleagues on the Committee to go away and give some thought to what the focus of our in depth scrutiny review will be. One possibility is Community Budgeting but we will discuss all ideas put forward at our next meeting. It is most important that the scrutiny review is timely and that scrutiny involvement adds value.

### **County Councillor Tim Swales**

Chairman Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall  
Northallerton  
July 2013