

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13 NOVEMBER 2013

**STATEMENT OF RURAL SERVICES, WASTE DISPOSAL, PUBLIC PASSENGER
TRANSPORT, TRADING STANDARDS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO
HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE**

Waste Management

Due to the delays to the Allerton Waste Recovery Park project caused by the planning process and appeals, we reached a formal decision point in the contract with AmeyCespa. Two reports were taken to Executive in September and October to enable the contract to continue. With planning now confirmed we are working with AmeyCespa to conclude outstanding issues, including the final cost, we will then be able to consider whether to proceed through Financial Close. This is likely to be in early summer 2014.

Members are aware that Government withdrew Waste Infrastructure Credits for the project in February, and that we have challenged this by asking for a Judicial Review of the decision. The hearing is timetabled for January 2014. The court has ordered DEFRA to serve their detailed grounds of defence by 8 November and at the time of writing this statement we have yet to fully assess the strength of the case and merits of continuing. I will keep members up to date with progress in this matter at future meetings of the Council.

Finally, we have begun a consultation process with residents and other stakeholders to review the way we handle construction and demolition waste across our Household Waste Recycling Centre network. Construction and demolition waste is not classed as household waste, but we have been accepting these wastes free of charge even though we have had no legal duty to do so. As pressure mounts on our collective budgets, we have taken the decision to stop offering free outlets for this type of material, and are asking users whether we should simply stop accepting these materials or accept them for a charge. This will enable us to meet our savings requirement from 2014/15 of £240,000. We are also taking the opportunity to gauge public opinion on other options to save money.

Public Rights of Way

The public rights of way team have been active in maintaining key links in the County's large network of rights of way and in doing so they have helped support the health of communities by promoting access to local walks and rides. The team continue to be supported in this by volunteers and increasingly other groups such as Community Payback teams where offenders have been giving back to society through path maintenance in the Ryedale & Scarborough areas.

Passenger Transport

We are approaching the final month of consultation on our proposals to reduce the amount we spend on subsidising bus services. So far there have been over 1000 responses some 70% of which have been submitted online. This consultation closes on 25 November.

Trading Standards

Operation Wasp:

Three males pleaded guilty in May to conspiracy to defraud and money laundering in relation to two vulnerable victims who they took repeatedly to banks, one from Harrogate and one from Leeds. One lady in her 70's with advanced dementia was taken to three different banks within two hours to withdraw cash for the offenders.

Two of the offenders, father and son Bernard Brian Collins and Barney Edward Collins, were sentenced on 10 July to 21mths and 10 months imprisonment respectively. The third male failed to appear and a warrant has been issued for his arrest.

Trading standards were not happy with the sentences passed and referred the case to the Attorney General's office for consideration as to whether they were unduly lenient. This was the first time any trading standards service had referred a case to the Attorney General's office due to unduly lenient sentences.

The Court of Appeal reconsidered the sentences of the two defendants on 24 September. In relation to both defendants they found their original sentences were indeed unduly lenient. Bernard Brian Collins' sentence was doubled to 42 months imprisonment. The Court also stated Barney Collins's sentence should have been 15 months imprisonment, but they declined to increase his sentence due to his progress in prison.

National Trading Standards eCrime Centre

Following the award of additional funding to the eCrime Centre by the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB), work to enhance the computer forensics lab is now complete. This investment has allowed us to double the floor space of the forensic lab and recruit 3 new forensic analysts and a forensic technician. As a result, the lab is now officially the National Computer Forensics Lab for e-crime and Scambusters. The lab has 9 computer forensic specialists working on a variety of regional and national investigations such as a large online advertising scam and an anti-virus software scam. Lord Toby Harris, chairman of NTSB and I joined on 7 October to officially open the new lab. Lord Harris has held a variety of government roles in the cyber security and e-crime environment and his visit demonstrates the importance of ensuring the good work of the National Trading Standards eCrime Centre is maintained".

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STATEMENT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER - LIBRARY, CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE

Libraries

Summer Reading Challenge

Members should have received a copy of the report for this year's Summer Reading Challenge – Creepy House. As well as encouraging children to visit the library more, the challenge provides them with the opportunity to read more, try new books, talk about the books they have read and share the experience with their families. For many children, the challenge increases their confidence and enjoyment in reading, as well as maintaining, or even improving, their reading levels over the long summer holiday. **This year more children in North Yorkshire took part than ever before, with 10,603 signing up for the challenge.**

All 43 libraries in North Yorkshire took part in the scheme, which ran from 13th July – 7th September. These include seven libraries now under community ownership, and one mobile library. For the first time, one library outlet (Darley) took part in the challenge.

Library Apprentices

Members will recall my last report about the work with library apprentices and the "Dragons Den". I challenged the apprentices to double the money they were awarded. I am pleased to say that the Harrogate team have more than done so with £1,000 from the George Moore Foundation and are currently waiting to hear the amount raised through the Waitrose Community Matters Scheme.

I am also pleased to state that four of the young people have already secured employment – as a result of the scheme two within the Library Service, one with a commercial company and the fourth as Reading Co-ordinator (School Librarian) with Upper Wharfedale School.

E-books

The use of our digital library continues to grow – particularly e-books. We now have over 5,000 titles in stock and have recently increased the number of junior titles held. An average 22% are on loan at any one time with average monthly issues growing from 541 to 2,467 since 2010/11. The highest use single title (208 checkouts from three copies) is a crime novel set in Whitley Bay, called Broken Silence by Danielle Ramsay!

Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is now available for free at all NYCC managed libraries for customers to access the internet via their own devices including Tablets, Smartphones and Wi-Fi enabled Laptops. During August, 788 customers benefitted from using the free Wi-Fi in libraries and surfed the internet for a total of 4,408 hours

Access to Services

Libraries have supported the public consultation on bus subsidies; to end of September, 51 individuals had been assisted to complete the on-line form, 338 forms were handed out and 63 returned via their local library.

Library Service Peer Review

In early July the Library Service was the subject of a Peer Review, managed by the LGA and funded by the Arts Council.

The role of the two peer reviewers, who were experienced library service managers from other library authorities, was to be a “critical friend” reviewing the service and assisting with the future direction of travel and with the revision of the library service strategy.

The review team interviewed senior managers and met with a cross section of staff and a group of stakeholders to look at how the service might contribute more effectively in terms of widening customer access to council services, increasing the health and well-being of communities and helping people into employment.

The review provided a qualitative assessment of the performance of the library service. The report was very positive, identifying both strengths and areas for further improvement/consideration.

The key strengths they identified were:-

- The range of services provided
- The positive impact the service has on the communities it serves
- A strong, resilient and customer centred service with staff who focus on customers and have a passion to help

- Strong political leadership and ownership of the challenge from Members
- Excellent relationships with partners and stakeholders in communities
- Libraries recognised as an economic stimulus to the future of the High Street
- Pioneering use of the insight and energies of apprentices to promote and develop the service
- Excellent quality standards

Areas for improvement/consideration included:-

- Consider Sunday opening
- Look for opportunities to be commissioned to provide services
- Staff to be super users of the web and digital environment
- Focus on the impact the service makes in people's lives
- Articulate a clear economic wellbeing offer demonstrating how libraries support people into employment

Library service managers have now produced an action plan to identify how the service will move forward on the recommendations, and will incorporate these into the revised strategy for the service.

PLUS (Public Library User Survey_

Libraries undertook the national PLUS earlier this year. The results are now available and are being evaluated for individual branches. Given that the previous survey was in 2009 the comparisons are interesting in light of the major changes that the service has faced over the intervening years. Overall satisfaction with the service has increased, an increase in use of public access computers and seeking information aligned with a slight decline in book borrowing. Libraries are proven to support healthy living with 47% of users walking to their local library.

Community libraries also scored higher for being a place to meet people and encourage relationships and family life. Many of the community libraries have said how useful they found the survey with a view to improving services offered as well as the 'vote of confidence' received such as "Great Ayton library is a fantastic community resource and the staff and volunteers are such a pleasure to deal with. Even though we live 25 minutes away we would never consider it a wasted journey."

ARCHIVES

The Record Office's new e-shop is now fully up and running at www.archiveshop.northyorks.gov.uk. It provides a new world-wide shop window for the goods and services available from the County Record Office, including large selections of maps and photographs, together with research services and tickets for events.

The 'Garrison Voices' Project, funded by the MOD's Community Covenant programme to explore the history of Catterick Camp, has reached a successful conclusion. An exhibition launch event, held at the new Catterick Library in September attracted more than 200 people, including a contingent which arrived from Northallerton on a traditional London Transport double-decker bus. Overall the project has attracted more than 2,000 veterans and civilians to volunteer information and assistance, held a series of events attended by over 1,000 people, created over 100 hours of recorded interviews, and uncovered more than 1,000 documents and photographs in private hands, achieving widespread media coverage.

A follow-up project, 'Garrison Origins' has recently been awarded £12,680 by the Community Covenant, to explore the early years of the Camp, using video technology, theatrical performance and sound recordings. This new phase will begin in December and run in parallel with national World War One commemoration in 2014, which coincides with the Camp's centenary.

Archives maintained its track record of media coverage with an appearance by team member Linda Turnbull in the ITV1 programme 'Secrets from the Workhouse' featuring Barbara Taylor Bradford. Ripon workhouse admission registers provide evidence that the novelist's mother and grandmother entered the workhouse in the 1920s.

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