

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 FEBRUARY 2014

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES

Superfast North Yorkshire

The Phase 1 roll out by BT continues on target and within budget.

Over 350 of the 670 cabinets planned for upgrade to fibre have been completed which means that as a result of the SFNY project approx. 100,000 premises now have access to broadband of speeds at 25 mbps or more. The target number for Phase 1 is 150,000 which will, when the contract is completed in the Autumn of this year ensure that, when added to the premises already enabled commercially, approx. 90 % of the premises in North Yorkshire and the City of York will have access to superfast broadband.

The issue increasingly is what are the prospects for the remaining 10% (approx. 50,000) premises which are spread unevenly across the county area.

SFNY has raised an additional £8m, of which NYCC has contributed £3m, and is currently awaiting a final proposal from BT as to how many premises, and where, this funding might be spent. The SFNY Advisory Board will then have to decide if that proposal is acceptable before the NYCC Executive, and the other funder, approve the release of the £8m.

The £8m, if spent with BT, will not get to 100% coverage. Therefore SFNY continues to work on other options including wireless schemes and satellite. Ultimately it will come down to how much public funding is made available. SFNY is at the point where wireless and satellite options now compete on cost (ie subsidy required) with BT but the public preference is very much in favour of the BT fibre based solution .There is also the continuing question mark over how the Government will allocate the additional £250m that it has available from 2015 .

Notwithstanding the above the Demand Stimulation Team continues to produce impressive results as far as the take up of superfast broadband is concerned. Nationally take up after 2 years is approx. 15%.In North Yorkshire we have established cabinets with over 20% and trend projections suggest 30% may be achieved. This not only justifies the Team but also the whole SFNY project and will enable us to claw back subsidy given to BT that can then be reinvested in more broadband infrastructure.

The Business Support activity is also progressing well .A recent mid-term review undertaken by an independent 3rd party has concluded that the project is well run ,is meeting its targets and is displaying best practice that the Government should refer to other authorities.

If any Councillor wishes to know more about the SFNY project please contact John Moore on john.moore@nynet.co.uk or 07711 375766. The SFNY Team will also attend public meetings etc to explain what is happening in a local area.

The National Apprenticeship Service

In the midst of all the current difficulties it's good to know that we still do some things very well and that we continue to invest in our staff and our young people. The National Apprenticeship Service in partnership with City and Guilds has identified NYCC in its list of 100 top apprenticeship employers for 2013. We received formal recognition in a letter of appreciation from Deputy Prime Minister. The list aims to recognise excellence in businesses that employ apprentices.

NYCC in recent years has not been able to recruit as many apprentices as previously due to the reduction in posts and the need to prioritise staff who need to be redeployed. We currently employ 29 apprentices who are completing a recognised apprenticeship qualification, but obviously many more, over 300 have completed an apprenticeship and work in established roles with the County Council.

In addition I've previously reported on the initiative started in 2012 to fund apprenticeships in the local economy and I'm pleased to say that the £400k allocated provided a wage subsidy for a total of 53 apprenticeships in North Yorkshire based employers and this project has now successfully concluded with just a handful of later appointments finishing their qualification over the next few months.

Performance Management

We are currently preparing the third quarter's performance report that will be considered by the Executive on 25 February. This continues the new style of performance report we adopted from the beginning of this year, which focusses on services identified as benefiting from in-depth analysis. The Q3 report will focus on Attainment at Schools, Looked After Children and Safeguarding in CYPS.

In the context of the 2020 North Yorkshire Programme, work will be undertaken so that the framework is developed in such a way to support the future vision and direction of the County Council. This will encompass aligning resources to meet our aims that emerge from the 2020 North Yorkshire Programme, ensuring we are focussed on what matters, using the right information to inform decision making and maximise productivity.

Procurement

2013 has been a very productive year for procurement related activity across the Council.

Over £73m of contracts have been awarded during 2013 and this reporting year has seen revenue based savings totalling in excess of £2.75m. Technology has played a part in achieving these savings with over £700K saved through the use of an eAuction on a recent procurement exercise for home to school transport. Procurement activity and savings have been reported across all of the directorates.

The consolidated Forward Procurement Plan (FPP) is being used as a procurement tool to improve on planning for large and complex procurements especially around the resourcing needs and the skills available.

The FPP is now loaded on to the Council's Internet on a quarterly basis so that potential suppliers can better understand the up and coming requirements of the Council – an important aspect of early supplier engagement.

An annual review of the service was completed in January. Performance across all aspects of the service is exceeding expectations. Satisfaction survey results from users of the service and from the 171 delegates attending the procurement training courses are particularly reassuring.

More recently, the 'Annual Report' for procurement services was discussed at a Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

Revenue Budget 2014/15

The Revenue Budget is dealt with elsewhere on the agenda and is clearly a key decision for the County Council as a whole. I just wish to draw the Council's attention to the Final Local Government Funding Settlement that was announced on 5 February 2014, the day after the Executive considered the Budget / MTFS. The Final Settlement merely resulted in an additional £18k of funding from government in 2014/15 when compared with the Provisional Settlement.

CARL LES