

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 MAY 2014

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES

Local Authority Pay Award

There is still no national pay settlement for local authority staff on NJC terms for 14/15. In March the National Employers made an offer to the Unions of a 1% increase on pay points 11 and above and more (between 1.25% and 4.6%) on pay points 5 to 10 with effect from 1st April 2014. The National Employers consider that more than this is not affordable to local authorities in the current financial situation.

This offer has been rejected by unions and since then UNISON, GMB and Unite have been consulting with their members with the outcome that UNISON and UNITE are to ballot members on strike action to take place over the summer. This means that like all other authorities we are not able to implement the pay award offered at the moment. Negotiations will no doubt continue nationally however it is unlikely that there will be an outcome before late summer.

Better Together

Just over a year since the agreement between NYCC and Selby District Council (SDC) to look at how the two councils could deliver a more efficient service for our residents by working 'better together', there is now good progress in a number of areas. With Mary Weastell appointed in a joint role as Chief Executive of SDC and Assistant Chief Executive of NYCC since November, 2013, this has helped to focus the programme on pursuing areas of clear benefits for both councils.

Progress has been made with a shared telephone system now in place which will be the start of improvements for customers that include the development of a shared customer relationship management system and the use of NYCC skills to develop SDC's website. Progress has also been made on the co-location of some services including the registration service's planned move to SDC offices and the Highways team and Assets team being jointly located.

There has also been progress in some of the back office systems with the use of NYCC's document management centre and joint working on the developing stronger families programme. There still remain further opportunities for more collaboration, which both councils are continuing to explore, which will improve how services are delivered for the communities in the Selby district.

Property

Following a review of the County Council's property activity that was undertaken during 2013 and the establishment of a re-configured Property Service significant activity is being undertaken to establish the new arrangements. This has included a

review of the services that are currently provided by Jacobs in advance of the end of their contract on 31 March 2016.

This was the subject of a recent Members Seminar and I would again request that any concerns encountered by Members are raised appropriately with Jon Holden in the first instance.

Procurement update

Procurement continues to be an area of significant activity in 2014. Over £16m worth of contracts have been successfully awarded in the first quarter and a further £155m worth of projects are currently work in progress.

The Forward Procurement Plan (FPP) continues to be an effective tool for making visible the Council's future procurement requirements and assisting in effectively planning for these needs. Planning is now also underway to understand the procurement activity to support the 2020 North Yorkshire Programme. As this work develops all procurement activity will be added to the FPP.

The Procurement Strategy is to be reviewed over the coming months to ensure that activity is aligned to the Council's objectives. This is part of the on-going need to ensure that plans remain appropriate and any changes will be brought forward for members to consider, particularly the Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

North Yorkshire Pension Fund

2014 promises to be another eventful year for the North Yorkshire Pension Fund. The Government has commissioned a number of pieces of work in recent years aimed at improving the affordability and sustainability of public sector pension funds. This started in 2010 with Lord Hutton's review and was followed by a number of consultations and other activity, culminating in the launch of the new career average Local Government Pension Scheme last month.

One of the current tasks for the Pension Fund Committee, which is chaired by the Leader, is to respond to the latest consultation on structural reform, launched earlier this month. It asks a number of questions about the cost effectiveness of investments made by the Council, which is the Fund's administrating authority. The future of the existing Pension Fund did look to be in doubt but it now appears likely that the North Yorkshire Pension Fund will remain as a separate entity. It is very likely, however, that there will be changes to the way in which the Fund makes its investments. The Pension Fund Committee will be responding to this latest consultation which ends on 11 July 2014.

CARL LES