

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**11 NOVEMBER 2015****COUNTY COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD****Statement of Final Accounts**

Another milestone in our financial calendar was achieved at the end of September as the Auditor signed off the County Council's and Pension Fund's accounts. Their report to the Audit Committee highlighted the significant over achievement of savings through 2020 programme and acknowledged that the Council's financial position going forward continues to be a challenge but our response continues to be robust and appropriate. The report also confirmed our arrangements for securing value for money for our residents over the last financial year.

Locality Budgets

In June 2015 the Executive approved the introduction of locality budgets for local Members. As a result of good financial management and delivering savings ahead of schedule it was possible to secure £720k so local Members were given a budget of £5k each per annum for a 2 year period to support community projects. The first proposals have now been processed and are starting to deliver benefits to our local communities. I know that many Members have welcomed the initiative and we will consult with all Members as we review the scheme in the run up to the end of Year 2.

This is local decision making in action. Whilst it may be uncomfortable for some Members to have to prioritise, it also means a level of accountability that many of us have not seen before.

Tribute to our Staff and Unions

It is true that an organisation's greatest resource is its staff, and it's particularly true for the County Council.

By and large our staff day in, day out, deliver good services, whether front facing or back office, to the communities and customers of North Yorkshire. They go the extra mile, demonstrating real effort and commitment. We have firm evidence of this with compliments from customers and in our workforce information. For example since 2010, some 40% of our staff have been affected by service restructuring which has impacted on their job in some way and some staff have been through this two and three times over recent years. This must cause some personal concern and anxiety. However our customers would not be aware of this because they continue to be committed and professional despite the evolving situation. We do our best to support them through this process.

We have one of the lowest sickness absence levels in the country, 6.2 days per employee, even comparing ourselves better than many large private sector organisations. In fact 57% of our staff haven't have a day off sick in the last year. Staff turnover levels have not really increased and this along with low levels of

sickness means our use of and spend on agency staff is extremely low, £132k compared to an average of £3m, as far as we can identify the lowest in the country for an upper tier authority

The staff survey recently completed by over 50% of staff show results that, despite this period of austerity and change for staff, were reassuringly positive with most areas having improved on the position in the last staff survey a few years ago. Staff said they are clear about what they are expected to achieve and are positive about their managers encouraging ideas, providing positive feedback and listening. They understand and endorse the council's change programme and felt there is a clear vision for the future. Many staff recognised that they have the opportunity to discuss changes in the service and 65% agreed that they were encouraged to think innovatively. It also gave clear pointers to areas we can improve which include senior management doing a good job at keeping staff informed, teams working effectively together across the council and staff feeling comfortable about raising issues. Plans are being drawn up by staff and managers across the council to follow up on the results.

Our staff continue to help us with make savings which started with changes to their terms and conditions from 2011/12 which reduced costs by £2million every year and continuing with them coming up with good ideas and working hard to reduce spend across all areas, particularly from doing things differently without impacting on service delivery. We now have staff innovation awards to celebrate the innovative work of our staff and highlighting examples of good practice because we want to recognise the contributions staff make

We continue to ask them to do more with less and they rise to the challenge every time.

In all issues that affect staff, we work in partnership with our recognised trade union UNISON and other associations where relevant. We have a good working relationship and problems are addressed and sorted out to the benefit of both employer and trade union.

So I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to our staff and their Unions, especially the local UNISON branch, in the way they continue to work with us to deal with the ever changing financial and organisational landscape. We could not have achieved what we have without this excellent partnership and understanding.

Property and Estates Management

A procurement exercise was recently concluded which saw the contracts for estates management and property services awarded to Mouchel. This arrangement comes into place with effect from April 2016 and replaces the current contract with Jacobs UK. There are some other changes which sees some internalisation of roles particularly relating to maintenance. More details will be provided to Members when arrangements are firmed up.

GARETH DADD