

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**24 February 2016**

### **COUNTY COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD**

#### Budget Update

County Council will consider the budget in some detail and the Leader has already made comment on aspects of this year's budget. It is, however, worth noting that the Council has continued to deliver its saving programme and by the end of March this year it looks likely that we have delivered a total of £116m of savings since 2011. This is great testament to the work carried out by Members and Officers of the Council. The ability to have a plan and then successfully implement that plan are all characteristics of this Council's approach and that is why we are as well placed as any other County Council to face the financial challenges over the remainder of this decade.

The Budget / MTFs Report which the Executive has recommended sets out further thinking on how we continue to ensure that the Council lives within its means by the end of the decade. Clearly more work needs to be done and we need to continue to review our options whilst prioritising to protect the most vulnerable in society.

#### LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

The Peer Challenge is a free LGA sector-led improvement offer for Local Authorities to tap into their peer group to assess where they stand in comparison. The review is not mandatory and it is not an inspection, therefore does not come with key lines of enquiry. The LGA allow the Local Authority to specify a scope and in our case we have chosen to look at our ability to meet the challenges of the year 2020.

We have now confirmed the date of the review to be 8 – 11 March 2016 where a team of 5 or 6 peers will be on site holding face-to-face and telephone interviews with people across the Council (both officer and Member) and with various partners, for example Selby Better Together. The output from the review will be a report to the Leader and Chief Executive at the end of the last day. This will then be followed up with a written letter formally from the LGA. I will, of course, ensure that Members are informed on the key findings of the review.

#### Pay award update

NYCC like the vast majority of local authorities, is part of the national pay structure and arrangements which determine the annual inflationary pay award for staff on the national terms and conditions. National negotiations for next year's pay award for council staff (not teachers) from April 2016 are on-going. The employers' side made an offer for the national trade union side to consider but most of the national unions did not feel able to recommend the offer to their members and want to continue negotiations. The Employers side is not prepared to return to negotiations as they consider the offer to be the best possible in view of on-going budget constraints for local government. The national unions are now balloting their members on the offer

and the outcome of these ballots will be known hopefully by the end of the month and there will then need to be further consideration by the unions of their position.

This means that there will not be a pay award for council staff in time to be implemented for 1 April 2016 when the National Living Wage of £7.20 comes into force. A national pay award along the lines of the Employers side offer would have meant that local government pay scales were National Living Wage compliant. So the County Council, like most local authorities, will need to increase pay rates at the bottom of the pay spine by 1-2% to ensure it pays the new National Living Wage of £7.20 from 1 April 2016. This is a temporary measure pending a national pay award agreement affecting Bands one, two and bottom of three and is within the budget which assumes a national annual pay award of 1-2%.

### Property

The ceiling replacement and associated refurbishment works to the Members' Corridor and meeting rooms has now been completed and these rooms are now back in use, although essential maintenance works continue to be undertaken. Feedback has generally been positive but if there are comments on how we can improve the effectiveness of the rooms then please let me know.

Planning work is being undertaken on other parts of the County Hall campus with the aim of increasing the efficiency of the Council's property. Our aim is to deliver an environment that promotes modern working practices for staff who will work more flexibly. Further works are expected to be undertaken later this year.

The County Hall site will host over 1000 members of staff on a daily basis. It is right that staff on the campus should have access to a good restaurant facility but a good restaurant can do more than feed staff. If we get it right then it can also be at the heart of the County Hall site where people come together to work on plans (using wifi and hot-desking principles etc). In other words it can help to increase productivity as part of a modern working environment.

I have therefore requested that different options for the future operation and management of the staff restaurant be investigated, including discussions with private providers. We will be meeting with possible providers later this month to investigate how this can be made to work and we will then consider next steps.

It should also be noted that the County Council's contract with Jacobs ends on 31 March. Staff within the Property Service are working to ensure that the new arrangements, including with Mouchel acting as the Projects and Estates Consultancy, will be effective from 1 April.

### Technology

Finally it is worth noting that as from 1 February, as part of our Better Together work with Selby, the County Council's Technology & Change Team have started to deliver Selby DC's IT function. Currently this is working well.

GARETH DADD