

Leader`s Statement

Peer Review

Members will know we have taken advantage of a free service provided by the Local Government Association, and recently welcomed a team of senior County Council officers, and a County Council Leader, for a week. During the time they were here in North Yorkshire they reviewed what and how we do our business, and interviewed many Members, and many of our partners.

I`m grateful to those Members and partners who agreed to make time to be interviewed.

I am pleased to report that they found our Council to be “very” (the highest category possible), well-led, well managed, and with staff who understand our communities and who “get” North Yorkshire, (85% live within the Council`s boundaries), and who work extremely hard to deliver high quality services, working within the financial constraints set for us by central government. I say something more about our staff below.

A copy of the report has been circulated to all Members, and to our partners.

Of course the value of this peer review is not to have a trophy sitting in a cabinet, but to use the contents of the report to improve further for the benefit of our residents. This will form future business for the Executive and Management Board, but I have asked Derek Bastiman, as Chair of Corporate O&S to review the report and if necessary add to our actions going forward. It may be that other O&S Committees want to review their own areas of interest and make recommendations to the Executive.

Staffing

County Council staff have been through huge changes since 2010 and these continue. Over 40% of our staff have been affected by service restructuring which has impacted on their jobs in some way with some staff having been through this two and three times since then. This level of change and uncertainty is obviously difficult for staff and we manage it by being open and honest with the staff affected, involving them from the outset in any proposed changes and support them throughout any change which affects them. This support is wide ranging with the outcome being that only 3% of staff who have left due to redundancy and change were still looking for a job at the time of leaving. We supported all the others to successfully find a job or do something else if that`s what they wanted. To date, since 2010, we`ve removed over 1300 posts, many part time for a few hours a week, in well over 200 restructures but compulsory redundancies have been kept to a minimum through good planning and removing posts when vacancies occur or hours reduce. We continue to focus savings on non-frontline posts as far as possible and the reduction in back office and managerial posts remains well over 20% including senior management reductions of 24%, but frontline reductions by contrast are at around 4%.

Despite the ongoing changes, our staff remain positive and committed. The staffing information we look at shows that despite any personal uncertainty, staff continue to work hard and be positive about their work. For example staff turnover remains relatively static at around 12%, sickness absence is extremely low at around 6 to 6.5 days off per employee, in fact well over half of our staff have not had a day off sick in

the last 12 months, our spend on agency staff to cover gaps is extremely low, and the recent staff survey was reassuringly positive with staff saying they were clear about what they are expected to achieve, they understood and endorsed the need for change and the change programme, and felt there was a clear vision for the future. They also said they had the opportunity to discuss changes in their service and were positive about their managers encouraging ideas, providing positive feedback and listening. The survey was undertaken late last year and we are now doing a further follow up shorter survey with staff to check on key areas and ensure that they still feel engaged and involved. I've been delighted with how keen staff are to give us their ideas with the staff ideas section on the intranet receiving over 100 ideas so far and the recent staff Innovation Awards having over 40 entries with some really excellent ideas and proposals from staff.

So in view of all this it wasn't a surprise to see that the peer review acknowledged the excellent workforce we have, their commitment to the council and local communities, and their contribution to, and resilience in the face of, ongoing change and the fact they continue to go the extra mile.

Tour de Yorkshire

The second TdY has been another spectacular success, with estimates of 2 million people watching from the road side. Many of these folk would be visitors to the County, some from within the Region and the UK, but many from overseas, all spending money in our economy. The television coverage also showed off our natural assets to 148 countries. Apart from this economic benefit there was huge local interest and involvement in the race.

Our highways team help to plan the route with Welcome to Yorkshire and ASO, and our Emergency Planners plan for all eventualities – unfortunately the weather and communications aircraft are out with our control. We now have an enhanced set of skills that add value to other operations. Furthermore, we work closely with District and Borough officers, and other partners such as the Police.

Already Districts are bidding for next year's starts and finishes, and W2Y are negotiating for this race to be a 4 day event, so securing an even more important place in the world cycling programme, and further raising the game for Women's cycling.

Devolution

Regrettably no progress to report. We maintain our position, shared with many others that "no deal is better than a bad deal", and that any deal must be for the benefit of all, not just some.

18 May 2016