

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**18 May 2016****COUNTY COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD**Pay award update

The pay award for NJC staff, which applies to the vast majority of non-teaching council staff, is set nationally and determined by national negotiations. 2 of the 3 trade unions (GMB and Unison) have now accepted the employers' offer leaving just Unite to respond. So hopefully there will be a final settlement very soon which will apply from 1st Apr 2016. It is a two-year agreement with a 1% increase in each of 2016 and 2017 for staff paid £18k and above and higher percentages for staff paid less, up to a maximum of 6.5% for our lowest paid staff. This pay award is to be welcomed and is within the 1.2% allocated in the budget. In the absence of this national agreement we had already had to increase the bottom pay points by 2% to accommodate the new national minimum rate from 1st April of £7.20 which will now be subsumed by this national increase. This national agreement which increases the pay of staff at the bottom of our pay grades to a greater extent whilst providing a small increase of 1% for other staff for the next 2 years will start to move our lower pay towards the new minimum living wage of around £9 by 2020 and offset cost of living increases for other staff. Our staff continue to work hard and perform well and it is important that this is recognised in a pay award which of course need to be affordable in these times of continuing budget reductions.

Revenue Budget

The outturn figures for 2015-16 are currently being finalised and will be reported to Executive on 14 June 2016. Provisionally, it looks like the outturn will be broadly in line with the figures reported at Q3 so it is encouraging that delivery of the savings programme remains on course with some areas ahead of schedule.

The Council has now received further information about the offer of a "multi-year financial settlement" from DCLG. We need to give notice to DCLG should we wish to take up the offer by 14 October 2016. The offer is to have some degree of certainty on Revenue Support Grant; Transitional Grant; and Rural Services Delivery Grant for the period 2017/18 to 2019/20. This decision will require Executive consideration and a subsequent recommendation to full County Council. We are therefore working to a date of 20 July 2016 for full County Council and further details will be provided in the run-up to that date.

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

As the Leader has raised in his statement, the LGA recently completed a corporate peer review of the Council. The scope of the review was to look at the plans we have in place and challenge whether they will get us to where we need to be by the year 2020. The LGA stress the review is not an inspection, is not mandatory and is part of their free sector-led improvement offering. As members will see from the report, the overall response from the LGA was extremely positive, noting excellent service

delivery across the Council. They also noted strong political and managerial leadership; that we have “tremendous grip” of our finances – although they noted there are further financial challenges ahead; how well we work in partnership to deliver great outcomes at a local level and, as a particular example, referenced our Children’s service as a “beacon” for other authorities to look towards.

Of course these types of review are not only to promote the strengths of the Council but also to highlight some areas where we can learn and improve upon. Crucially the LGA did not identify any specific gaps in our 2020 North Yorkshire plans and instead chose to state that we should continue in those areas where we are making progress. Examples of this include the work on commerciality (through SmartSolutions), our approach to economic growth and succession planning of key members of staff. In addition to the above, the LGA also recognised the challenges and opportunities in working in a complex partnership environment.

A formal letter with the report findings will be issued by the LGA in the coming weeks which will be published publicly. We will also be providing a more detailed update at the member’s seminar on 11th May and Overview & Scrutiny Committees will no doubt review the report as the Leader has indicated. Finally, the LGA will be returning in the future to reflect on progress we have made since their review.

County Hall update

As previously advised, we are about to launch an exercise to find new catering contractors for the County Hall campus. We have had some discovery days with a number of potential interested parties and we remain interested in what other think we can do with the facilities. We hope to get a further good response and I will report back to Members the outcome of the exercise.

Some of you will also have noticed that much of scaffolding has now been removed from the front of County Hall. Work is on-going on some smaller scale repairs but the remainder of the scaffolding from the front of the building will soon be down and will feel more like normal service has resumed.

There have been lots of positive comments about the work that has been done to the meeting rooms and the improvements that have been made. The new technology also appears to be proving successful and is hopefully helping Members in carrying out their role as we look to modernise how the whole Council works.

GARETH DADD