

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NORTH YORKSHIRE AND YORK

16 APRIL 2010

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER RURAL AFFAIRS FORUM

REPORT OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR PETER SOWRAY

Background

It has been necessary to review rural arrangements alongside the wider changes to regional working. As a result, the Rural Board has been abolished but the Yorkshire and Humber Rural Affairs Forum (YHRAF) is to be re-constituted and re-energised.

A new Chair has been appointed to the YHRAF after the current Chair, Graham Ward, stands down after many years diligent service. The new Chair is Tony Pexton who has a farming and business background and is based near Drifffield in the East Riding. Tony has been extensively involved through the National Farmers Union but is also well aware of rural issues beyond those relating to farming.

The new YHRAF is to work as a Regional Forum with a Management Group (effectively replacing the YHRAF Steering Group). This Management Group brings together formal representation from each of the four functional sub regions, Local Government Yorkshire and Humber, other key partners including expertise and sectoral interests in the rural sphere. The intention is then to ensure that the rural expertise is covered on the cross cutting Regional Sustainable Development Board and it is intended that there will be a "link member" with the YHRAF Management Group.

It is early days for the new way of working but dates are now being organised for the Management Group and subsequent Forum meetings. As the nominated Member for the sub region, I will keep you all posted on developments.

YHRAF Meeting 9 February 2010

The first meeting of the refreshed YHRAF took place on 9 February and it was an opportunity for the new Chair to introduce himself and to thank Graham Ward for his years of dedicated service.

There were a number of presentations and discussions centred around food and the importance to rural communities. There were three main presentations, each of which gave a different perspective on the issue –

1. The Governments strategy for a secure food system – Food 2030 – a presentation from David Fraser on behalf of Government Office Yorkshire and the Humber.
2. Food 2030 – the view from behind the goal – a presentation by Tony Lomax from Yorkshire Forward.
3. Place and contribution of local food – a presentation by Sarah Knapper on behalf of Regional Food Group Yorkshire and Humber.

There were then a number "problem solving" sessions themed around the following –

Encouraging people to eat a healthy sustainable diet

Ensuring a resilient, profitable and competitive food system

Increasing food production sustainably

Reducing the food systems green house gas emissions

Reducing, reusing and re-processing waste

The intention is that the product of these sessions is pulled together and used to help inform the priorities of the Rural Affairs Forum as it moves forward. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

PETER SOWRAY