

Local Government North Yorkshire and York

28 September 2012

General Updates

Report of the Honorary Secretary

Purpose of the Report

1.0 To provide a brief update on issues which do not require a full paper.

2.0 North Yorkshire Credit Union – Report of Gary Fielding (Assistant Chief Executive - Policy, Performance and Partnerships)

2.1 An email was sent to all Council Leaders and Chief Executives from Gary Fielding on 20 September 2012 at 14:32.

3.0 Sub-Regional Housing Board – Report of Wallace Sampson (Chief Executive, Harrogate Borough Council)

Enhanced two tier project title: Affordable Housing

Project Description: Working together to increase the number of affordable housing units

Project Lead: Colin Dales, Richmondshire District Council
01748 827007. E-mail: colin.dales@richmondshire.gov.uk

3.1 Progress to date/update:-

- (a) The Housing Partnership's Annual Report has been drafted for 2011/12 and is available on request. This highlights key achievements including the delivery of 236 new affordable homes as part of the Local Investment Plans (York and North Yorkshire) against a forecast of 303. Of these new affordable homes, 126 were delivered via the Rural Housing Enabler Programme. In terms of private sector housing investment, 2173 homes benefitted from improvements, representing spend of just over £2.35 million in the year.
- (b) The Rural Housing Enabler Programme based on the new funding model continues to bed in well and a Rural Housing Week is planned in October. A Service Level Agreement and Terms of Reference have been approved.
- (c) A North Yorkshire Tenancy Strategy for Local Authorities – a new statutory requirement introduced by the Localism Act – is at an advanced draft stage and will be submitted to the Housing Board in October following comprehensive consultation with partners.

- (d) The North Yorkshire Housing Strategy and North Yorkshire Homeless Strategy are to be merged into one document, subject to Housing Board approval in October. An opportunity has also been taken to undertake a “light touch” update of the strategy as part of this piece of work. The North Yorkshire Homeless Group will continue to operate and coordinate homeless initiatives and provide annual updates.
- (e) A single homelessness prevention plan for York and North Yorkshire has been developed and will attract £279,000 funding to support preventative work. The plan has been revised following feedback from CLG.
- (f) Work on a new bank account developed in partnership with the North Yorkshire Credit Union – the “Jam Jar” account – to help financially excluded tenants manage the move to the direct payment of benefits as part of the new Universal Credit system is on hold pending the outcome of current negotiations on the future of the credit union.
- (g) The North Yorkshire Housing Strategy post, currently funded by Local Authorities, is under review as the Housing Partnership considers its future resource needs. A report will be submitted to the October Housing Board.

3.2 Barriers to progressing the project over the next period:-

- (a) The main barrier continues to relate to current housing market conditions which are hindering the contribution that the planning system can make to affordable homes delivery.
- (b) Lack of suitable land continues to be a barrier to the delivery of affordable housing.
- (c) Homes and Communities Agency funding has been cut as part of CSR by approximately 70% which has created a great deal of uncertainty in terms of future outputs. Funding is based on a new affordable housing model whereby rents are up to 80% of market levels. This will impact differently across the county depending on housing benefit levels and the strength of the private rental market.
- (d) Private sector housing improvement funding ceased from 1 April 2011 as a direct result of CSR. Local Authorities still have the freedom to fund private sector housing renewal from their own funds, but current feedback from Local Authority colleagues is that this area of activity has stopped with Disabled Facilities Grants being the core business.

4.0 Sub-Regional Spatial Planning and Transport Board

4.1 Please see separate item on today’s Agenda.

5.0 LGYH Council – Report of Councillor Tom Fox (Vice-Chair of LGYH Council) (Scarborough Borough Council)

5.1 The LGYH Council met on 22 May 2012 when the following matters were considered.

- (a) It was reported that Carole Hassan, LGYH had departed from LGYH and that Justin Homer was currently Acting Director.

- (b) **Local Elections Stocktake** - A summary briefing from recent local elections in Yorkshire and Humber was noted by Members. It was agreed to send a letter of thanks to Ian Greenwood for his contribution to LGYH over the last few years and for his role as Y&H representative on the LGA Executive, Workforce Board and lead role on pensions.
- (c) **Redefining the Relationship Between Local and Central Government Commission on the Future of Local Government – Findings and Conclusions and LGA “Independent Local Government” Campaign** - Cllr Keith Wakefield (Leeds CC) reported on the emerging findings of the Leeds City Council led “Commission on the Future of Local Government” set up in 2011 to reassess the role of local government in the 21st century and put forward practical actions that aim to revitalise local democracy and public services. It was noted that the launch of the Commission’s final report in parliament was on 3 July. Fabian Hamilton MP (Leeds North East) was also welcomed to the meeting in his capacity as Member of the Parliamentary Political and Constitutional Reform Committee (PCRC) and summarised the work of the PCRC and a proposed draft Code to put the role of local government on a legal footing. During discussion the following points were made:
- The need to increase electorate turn-out within localities following the recent local elections. Compulsory voting was highlighted.
 - Constitutional settlement – the need for a written constitution for democratic local government and a call for Government to establish a “Royal Commission” to take this forward.
 - The impact of potential Scottish independence on the local economies and communities of Yorkshire and Humber needs to be further explored and understood.
 - Local government would benefit from a statutory ‘Code’, to give greater freedoms and genuine independence – e.g. facilitation the raising of local taxes and better able to tackle the range of issues that affect local people.
 - The existing model of local government and the funding system that underpins it is too restricted at present and disadvantages the North overall.
 - To recognise that ‘one size does not fit all’ given different models within local authorities – attention should not be on “models” of local government, as this must be flexible and tailored to local contexts.
 - Ensuring Elected Members have a more enhanced local democratic role was key.
 - Relationship between central government and localities – the need for a framework/further clarity over the roles and functions of Central Government was also seen to be needed.
 - A general call for greater powers around economic growth – particularly skills, transport and housing, with more flexibility regarding the devolution and pooling of funding schemes.
- (d) **Affordable Housing – Presentation of Research Report Findings** - Jon Sawyer, Managing Director, Eye and Tom Bridges, Associate Director, Arup attended for this part of the meeting to summarise the key findings and conclusions following discussions at a previous LGYH Council meeting and request by Members to produce a short, high level report updating on the economic and policy context around delivering affordable housing at local

level. The report was welcomed by Members and it was agreed that the report should be referred to local authorities via the various sub-regional housing structures across Yorkshire and Humber, for further detailed consideration.

- (e) **Strategic Issues from Sub-Regions** - Members from the Humber reported back on the Government's offer to write down £150m of the Humber Bridge debt which stood at £332m to allow the toll for cars to be reduced for £3.00 to £1.50.
- (f) **Y&H Improvement and European Board – Report back & “LG Inform” Presentation** - A report providing an update of the work of the Y&H Improvement and European Board was noted. During discussion Members emphasised the need for there to be a better mechanism for authorities to be more open to challenge and to sharing their strengths and weaknesses.
- (g) **Transformation of Health Services/Health and Well-Being Boards** - Cllr Jonathan Owen (East Riding of Yorkshire Council) highlighted that Elected Member engagement in discussions relating to the transformation of health services via the Y&H Health and Well-Being Elected Members' Network had been low and made a plea to Members to ensure that their lead Portfolio Holders were fully engaged in the process.
- (h) **LG Inform** - Ian Carbutt, Programme Manager, LGA, with Mark Edgell, Y&H Regional Associate, LGA, gave a demonstration of the LG Inform database which enables local authorities and fire and rescue authorities to access performance/contextual data and summarise how they compare to the rest of England. Members emphasised the need to have a more easily understandable format for the presentation of findings on the LG inform online service and requested that a small group of Elected Members/Officers work with the LGA (namely, via the Y&H Improvement and European Board) to look at alternative models for a more simplified system for Elected Members, which can also better reflect the wider context in which service decisions are made.
- (i) **Yorkshire and Humber Employers' Committee** - Cllr Mark Crane, Chair, Y&H Employers' Committee updated Members on issues discussed at the Employers' Committee relating to Pay 2012/13 and Pensions. Workforce priorities for Yorkshire and Humber were noted as follows: Supporting the Public Health transfer process effectively; Impacting on and influencing the Y&H NHS Local Education and Training Board to the benefit of local authorities; and Employer of choice and workforce strategy issues – supporting work being led by the Y&H Local Authority Chief Executives' Group. Members discussed early planning regarding pay and conditions issues for 2013 and noted the need for Leaders to play a key role in the consultation process and that the Employers' Committee will present recommendations for Leaders to consider at the LGYH AGM in July.
- (j) **All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire** - A report updating on progress of the APPG for Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire, established by the region's MPs and the joint APPG/Dods regional conference taking place on Friday, 25 May in Leeds was noted.

- (k) **Local Government Association Executive & Programme Boards** - A report detailing key strategic policy issues of interest discussed at the Executive and Programme Boards since the last LGYH Council meeting in February was noted by Members.
- (l) **Yorkshire and Humber Chief Executives' Group** - The minutes from the Y&H Chief Executives' Group's last meeting held on 22 March were noted. Kersten England, Deputy Chair of the Group, also re-iterated to Members that the Group works under the direction of the LGYH Council and supports its Members in its work and priorities.
- (m) **LGYH Review and Horizon Scan** - Members were provided with an update on the recent LGYH review and a list of forthcoming local government policy issues/developments to help inform views on LGYH's priorities for collaborative activity in 2012/13. Members agreed to revisit this paper at the LGYH Annual General Meeting in July, following further consideration amongst Y&H Chief Executives at their Group meeting on 14 June.
- (n) **Local Government Representation on the Yorkshire Water Customer Forum (Price Review)** - It was agreed to approach Cllr Dave Merrett, City of York Council, to see if he would consider representing local government on the Yorkshire Water Customer Forum. LGYH to confirm with Cllr Dave Merrett, City of York Council and inform Yorkshire Water of the outcome.

5.2 The following matters were considered at the LGYH Council AGM on 6 July 2012.

- (a) **Annual Report 2011/12** - The content of the draft LGYH Annual Report detailing activities of the LGYH partnership during 2011/12 was agreed.
- (b) **LGYH Draft Statement of Accounts 2011/12 – subject to Audit** - The draft outturn for 2011-12 (subject to audit) was noted and it was agreed to delegate authority to the Director in consultation with the LGYH Chair and Chair of the Y&H Local Authority Chief Executives' Group to approve the final audited accounts.
- (c) **LGYH Appointments**

LGYH Chair & Vice Chairs, LGYH

It was noted that Cllr Peter Box (Wakefield Council) would be standing down as LGYH Chair in order to concentrate further on wider responsibilities within Leeds City Region but would be taking on the role as Vice Chair, LGYH for the remaining term (2012/13).

It was confirmed that the new LGYH Chair appointed by West Yorkshire Authorities would be Cllr Mehboob Khan (Kirklees MC) for the remaining term (2012/13).

In line with the agreed LGYH Constitution, it was also noted that the role of LGYH Chair for the period 2013-2015 was due to rotate to the Humber sub-region.

The current LGYH Vice Chairs representing other sub-regions in Y&H were also confirmed as follows – South Yorkshire (Cllr Roger Stone, Rotherham MBC); Humber (Cllr Stephen Parnaby, East Riding of Yorkshire Council) and North Yorkshire (Cllr Tom Fox, Scarborough BC).

Local Government Association Executive - It was also agreed that Cllr Keith Wakefield (Leeds CC) be the nominated Y&H representative on the LGA Executive for the period 2012/13 given Cllr Mehboob Khan already occupies a seat on the Executive in his capacity as Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board and Cllr Peter Box as Chair of the Economy and Transport Board.

LGYH Council 2012/13 - The named representatives for the LGYH Council for 2012/13 were confirmed.

LGYH Employers' Committee 2012/13 - The named representatives for the LGYH Employers' Committee for 2012/13 were confirmed.

LGYH Improvement and European Board 2012/12 - Nominations received from sub-regions for the Y&H Improvement and European Board were noted – South Yorkshire (Cllr Roger Stone, Rotherham & Chair) and Cllr Paul Coddington (Doncaster MBC); Cllr Judith Blake (Leeds City Council). Representatives for Humber and North Yorkshire and York were still to be confirmed.

Elected Member Leads 2012/13 - The Y&H Elected Member leads for 2012/13 were agreed.

Outside Bodies

EU Committee of the Regions - It was noted that no expressions of interest had been received from authorities for a female Conservative Elected Member to represent Y&H as Full Member on the EU Committee of the Regions for the term 2012-15. Members agreed to go back to their individual authorities again to see if there was any further interest. It was agreed that this should be referred to the LGA Conservative Group office for a national decision if no further nominations were received by the end of July.

Welcome to Yorkshire Board of Directors - It was agreed that Cllr Peter Box (Wakefield Council) be re-appointed onto the Welcome to Yorkshire Board of Directors for the 3 year period (2012-2015).

Y&H Strategic Migration Partnership - It was agreed that Cllr Olivia Rowley (Wakefield Council) be re-confirmed as Chair of the Y&H Strategic Migration Group for the period 2012/13.

LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group - Three expressions of interest were received at the meeting for two of the Y&H seats on the LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group – Cllr Symon Fraser (East Riding of Yorkshire Council), Cllr Michael Ellis (Bradford MDC) and Cllr Tim Swift (Calderdale MBC). It was noted that LGYH would fill the first seat and the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee would be requested to fill the second seat.

LGYH Honorary Officers

Members agreed the following LGYH Honorary Officer appointments for the period 2012/13:

- Secretary – Justin Homer (Director, LGYH)
- Regional Employers' Secretary – Steve Walmsley (Head of Regional Employers' Service, LGYH)
- Treasurer – Sarah Tyler (Strategic Support Manager, LGYH)
- Auditors – Mazars LLP

- (d) **LGYH Organisational Structure, Budget Headlines, Core Principles for 2012/13 and Member Allowances** - The new LGYH organisational structure, budget headlines and core principles for 2012/13 were noted by Members. It was agreed to end the current system of LGYH Member Allowances and to also commit to continue to keep Member subscriptions as low as possible.
- (e) **LGYH Constitution Amendments** - Members agreed a number of changes to the LGYH Constitution to reflect the deletion of the LGYH Chief Executive post and new post of Director, reporting to the Chair of the Y&H Chief Executives' Group, governance arrangements regarding the Improvement and European Board and sub-regional partnership structures.
- (f) **Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) Representation on LGYH** - A discussion took place regarding the abolition of Police Authorities and the new Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) with regard to membership of LGYH and ongoing engagement. It was agreed to invite the newly elected PCCs or their Deputies onto the LGYH Council Membership following the PCC elections in November 2012 and to have further discussions at the next LGYH Council meeting in September.
- (g) **LGYH Collaborative Priorities for 2012/13** - Members' views were sought on the following broad priority areas of work for LGYH for 2012/13:
- Greater Devolution for Local government
 - Transport and wider infrastructure investment
 - A single voice to promote growth
 - Local government Finance

During discussion the following issues were highlighted by Members:

- Adding value as a collective body and ensuring there is no duplication/conflict with local authority and sub-regional/LEP agendas was key as well as ensuring that the work plan is not too prescriptive allowing flexible capacity to deal with issues as they arise. For example, the recent announcement of the closure of Leeds Children's Heart Surgery Unit was a critical issue for the whole region where authorities can come together as a collective voice to lobby to oppose its closure. It was therefore agreed that the new Chair, Cllr Mehboob Khan should write on behalf of LGYH in the first instance.
- There was strong support for the need to continue to provide support to the All Party Parliamentary Group to help enhance the voice of the region in Parliament and ensure it is steered in the direction councils

need it to be. It was therefore agreed that the new LGYH Chair, Cllr Mehboob Khan should write to the APPG MPs to express collective LGYH support.

- Working more closely with the North East and North West was highlighted in terms of ensuring a stronger 'Voice for the North'.

It was suggested that the paper should be seen as setting out a "maximum" of LGYH activity over the coming year and the Partnership's focus should be on concentrating on a small number of core activities where genuine value can be added through region-wide collaboration. Care should be taken for LGYH to not take on additional roles or functions over the year ahead.

It was agreed that a more detailed set of priorities/work plan would be brought back to Members for consideration at the December Council meeting.

- (h) **Future of Local Government Pay Negotiations** - Cllr Mark Crane, Chair of the Y&H Employers' Committee provided an update on the discussions at the recent meeting of the Employers' Committee held on 28 June.
- (i) **LGYH Schedule of Meetings 2012/13** - The following schedule of LGYH Council meetings for 2012/13 was agreed subject to looking into re-scheduling the May 2013 date due to two local authorities (City of York Council and Scarborough BC) highlighting that the date clashed with their Annual Council meeting.
 - Wednesday, 19 September 2012 (2.00-4.00pm – York)
 - Thursday, 13 December 2012 (10-12noon – Orangery, Wakefield)
 - Thursday, 28 February 2013 (10-12noon – Orangery, Wakefield)
 - Thursday, 23 May 2013 (10-12noon – Orangery, Wakefield)
 - Thursday, 11 July 2013 (10-12noon – Orangery, Wakefield)

6.0 Yorkshire and Humberside European Regional Development Fund Performance Management Board for North East and West Yorkshire – Report of Councillor Derek Bastiman (Scarborough Borough Council)

6.1 The following business was discussed at a meeting held on 5 July 2012:-

It was reported that the June 2012 exchange rate had reduced the Programme value by £10.2 million, to £465.55 million. The Programme value had reduced by £22.15 million since January 2012. The ERDF Programme was currently 63% legally committed at £294 million (2% increase since June 2012). That increase was partly due to exchange rate fluctuations. However £4.4 million of additional commitments had been signed since the last PMB. This momentum in legal commitments needed to be maintained in order to ensure full Programme allocation commitment and reduce the risk to 2012 and subsequent years N+2. The recommendation from the Board was to note:- potential levels of commitment with a strong indicative pipeline to commit the remaining amount of ERDF Programme investment; the treatment of N+2 2012 as high risk; and the need to accelerate claims performance in terms of submission and values if the year's spending target was to be achieved. It was also agreed that areas of modification in principle subject to continued analysis of Programme performance, development of detailed proposals, further consultation with board and liaison with EC representatives.

6.2 The following business was discussed at a meeting held on 29 August 2012:-

It was reported that, due to the exchange rate, the value of the programme had been reduced by some £10.44m to £455.11M. The programme was currently 65% committed at £295.7M, which was an increase of 2% since last reported. However, project spend for 2012 was lower than contracted or forecasted due to the pace and value of claims following the push of N+2 2011. It was noted that the programme needed to spend £56M over the remaining months to hit the annual 2012 spend. Projects that expected to deliver on time would account for some £45.5M which left a residual amount of £9.5M to be allocated/claimed by December 2012 otherwise this money would be lost out of the programme. To that end it was agreed that a sub-committee would be formed to interview/assist claimants in order to achieve the targets set for 2012. I have been asked to be part of this group. Letters will be sent out as a matter of urgency to all claimants inviting them to come along for help and advice where necessary.

Project update - We rejected the Building Better for Less project application from the Homes and Community Agency, the reason being, the project had failed to demonstrate a reasonable level of value for money. Negotiations with the applicant had failed to increase significantly the level of outputs and results to be delivered by the project.

Approval was given to the Horncastle Group for the Green Park development which was a unique project which co-located eco offices with industrial accommodation targeted at the priority growth sectors of advanced engineering and metals, food and drink and environmental technologies. Phase 1, the subject of this application, comprised infrastructure to service the 7.5 hectare site and the provision of 5927 sq. mts. of space in 15 units.

7.0 Yorkshire and Humber Member Improvement and European Board – Report of Councillor Derek Bastiman (Scarborough Borough Council)

7.1 We received a report from Councillor Paul Lakin (Chair, Yorkshire and Humber Member Children's Network). He explained how the plan intended to build on the engagement of 15 authorities and the utilisation and development of regional talent in the design and delivery of activity. He also explained the highly successful RIEP funded Attract and Support Programme and, in particular, the ground breaking "Children's Social Work Matters" campaign. Among other emerging issues, he mentioned a strong governance infrastructure, including a Regional Children's Improvement Board with clear terms of reference and links with the recently established Regional Members' Improvement Board, creating opportunities for children's sector led activity to be coherent with the broader sector led improvement agenda in councils. The Chair, Councillor Stone, proposed that a sum of legacy money from the RIEP should be identified for further sensitive work within the children/young person's sector and this was agreed. The Chair intended to contact the Leaders to explain how this piece of work would help the region.

We received a report on productivity, procurement and efficiency and noted that this was making good progress on improving the procurement framework across the region. Nearly all Councils across the region were involved in some way in the regional procurement activity and the strategic procurement group was receiving regular representation from an average of 14 out of the 22 Councils in the region. I raised the point again that we, as a Board, should fully explore the possibilities of a

regional purchasing framework for vehicles, especially refuse freighters, as these were very expensive to purchase/replace and an agreement to purchase a certain number of vehicles over a period of time could lead to greater savings to Authorities throughout the region.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 That the report be noted.

Richard Flinton

Honorary Secretary to Local Government North Yorkshire and York