

**Chief Executives' Group - North Yorkshire and York
12 May 2011**

Partnership communications

1 Introduction

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| 1.1 This report suggests a way forward for communications in county level partnership working in North Yorkshire and York. |
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2 Background

- 2.1 Following discussions at Local Government North Yorkshire and York (LGNYY) and the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership (NYSP) Executive regarding partnership rationalisation a simpler, sub-regional approach to partnership working is being adopted.
- 2.2 In the light of this, current provision for communication and networking are being reviewed. This paper covers:
- Website
 - Wider partnership newsletter
 - Wider partnership conference

3 Website

- 3.1 The website which served the NYSP www.nyssp.org.uk is hosted and supported by Net Construct. It was originally designed and developed in 2005 and met the requirements for a NYSP web presence at that time. However, use of the site by partners has increased, both quantitatively and qualitatively, far beyond what was envisaged at the time of set up. The site now hosts the welcome pack and the joint engagement database in addition to meeting papers, key messages and newsletters for a variety of partnership bodies. Unfortunately, the website is limited in terms of functionality and user friendliness, having accessibility issues and no search facility.
- 3.3 Annual support costs for the website by Net Construct are currently £1725. These costs are met by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC). Updating to the site is carried out by staff employed by partner organisations, in particular NYCC.
- 3.4 Clearly since the NYSP is effectively no longer in existence a website branded in this way will not be appropriate in the future. However, there will still be a need to provide a web presence for partnership working to ensure transparency and open communication. It would also be preferable to have one website to provide this function rather than every partnership body having an individual website.
- 3.5 Given the financial climate and the decision to simplify partnership arrangements a bespoke externally hosted website would be neither affordable nor appropriate. Rebranding the current website would also not be acceptable due to its limited functionality.
- 3.6 One cost effective way forward would be to establish a partnership website using the same content management system as the North Yorkshire County Council

website. It would be clearly differentiated by virtue of domain name, design, presentation and content. There would be a set up cost from NYCC's website supplier of £414. This would be met by NYCC as would design and ongoing support and updating.

4 Wider partnership newsletter and key messages

- 4.1 The wider partnership is open to all organisations and partnerships interested in the wellbeing of North Yorkshire's communities. Consisting of approximately 400 representatives from across the public, business, voluntary and community sectors, this body has shown itself to be a good forum for consultation and briefing.
- 4.2 Email key messages from key meetings are circulated to this group and quarterly newsletters are also currently provided. These are produced and paid for by NYCC and allow information sharing and engagement. They are produced as web friendly PDF documents which are emailed to contacts and also placed on the website. Feedback shows that these communication mechanisms are valued by recipients.
- 4.3 It is suggested that these mechanisms should be retained in their current form as they are cost effective means of communication to a wide audience.

5 Wider partnership conference

- 5.1 An annual autumn conference has been held since 2003. This conference is an opportunity for delegates to network, join workshops, share ideas and hear speakers on issues important to their organisations and to the county. Evaluation has shown that it is valued by participants for the opportunity to influence decision making in North Yorkshire at a strategic level – the majority of whom are not members of formal partnerships.
- 5.2 Except for two years when the conference was funded by partner contributions, the events have been funded by NYCC. This model is costly to run and resource, although arrangements for the 2010 event were rationalised to deliver some cost savings without compromising on the quality of the event. Feedback from the 2010 event showed that delegates valued the event but felt that changes should be made to the scale and format and that a more specific focus would be beneficial.
- 5.3 Given the opportunity provided for networking and engaging in an environment of great change, the Group may wish to retain some form of partnership event. Costs might be reduced through alternative delivery methods, for example seminar events for a limited number of relevant partners on a specific issue as and when appropriate rather than one large event annually.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Chief Executives' Group agree a way forward for provision of partnership communication for North Yorkshire and York.

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