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**REPORT TO:** OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 6 OCTOBER 2011

**REPORT OF THE:** HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION  
CLARE SLATER

**TITLE OF REPORT:** SCRUTINY REVIEWS PROGRESS REPORT – POST  
OFFICES AND HEALTHY WEIGHT

**WARDS AFFECTED:** ALL

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To present the progress achieved to date with the scrutiny reviews currently being undertaken.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That Members agree their choice of topic for the next scrutiny review to be undertaken.

2.2 That Members delegate authority to the Head of Transformation, in consultation with the Chairman, to prepare a response from the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the consultation on the possible Mutualisation of Post office Ltd.

2.3 That Members agree the recommendations of the Healthy Weight Scrutiny Review.

2.4 That Members note the progress made with the reviews and note the date of the next task group meeting.

### **3.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS**

3.1 Any risks associated with the reviews are detailed in the report below.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has commissioned two scrutiny reviews and the terms of reference have previously been agreed by this committee for each of these. The first is to prepare for any future changes to the Post Office Network in Ryedale and the second to investigate the support which can be given to young adults to maintain a healthy weight.

- 4.2 The Ryedale area was particularly severely affected by the last round of post office closures, with almost half of its branches being either closed or replaced with a mobile or outreach service. Following the last general election a publication was issued by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills 'Securing the Post office Network in the Digital Age' stated that 'There will be no programme of post office closures under this Government'. The Department has confirmed that this statement includes outreach services which accounts for 38% of Ryedale's Post Office Services.
- 4.3 At the inaugural meeting of the Healthy Weight Review Task Group a presentation from the Health Improvement Manager from NHS North Yorkshire and York clarified the current position in Ryedale and the improvements being made in reducing levels of obesity in children and adults, it made clear the need to develop a very clear and focussed scope for the review. It was agreed that the scope for the review should focus on adults, as it was felt there were already effective initiatives in place to tackle childhood obesity. The task group refined the terms of reference for the Healthy Weight Review to investigate the active lifestyles of young adults aged between 16 and 25 and the role the Council can play in encouraging this.
- 4.4 Action Plans are in place for each of the reviews and progress is reported at the Task Group meetings.

## **5.0 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Surveys have been made available for the public and citizen's panel to complete for each of the reviews.

## **6.0 REPORT DETAILS**

### **6.1 Post Office Review:**

Over the summer, this review entered the consultation phase. Surveys were circulated to all the Post Office branches in Ryedale, in order to consult with Post Office customers. A similar survey was also distributed to the Citizen's Panel and the general public, to find out how Post Offices are valued and whether there is a demand for accessing some of the Council's services through the Post Offices. Customers of the Mobile service were also asked for their views. The surveys closed at the end of August and the completed questionnaires have been collated and the results are currently being analysed, for presentation to the next task group meeting. The Department for Business Innovation and Skills has recently launched a consultation on the possible mutualisation of the Post Office Ltd. The consultation document explores what a mutual Post Office Ltd might look like. It seeks feedback for more clarity on the issues that the Government would need to take into account before mutualisation could be achieved.

Actions currently being undertaken include:

- Finalising survey results
- Arranging a task group meeting to discuss the results of the surveys
- Study use of Council Tax payment cards
- Mapping of rural businesses where alternative Post Office services are available including Paypoint and parcel delivery services.
- Preparation of a draft response to the consultation on the mutualisation of Post Office Ltd.

The next meeting of the task group will be held on 10 November 2011 at 6.00pm

## 6.2 Health Weight Review:

It has been agreed to focus the scope of the review on levels of activity undertaken by adults in particular 16 – 25 year olds.

A task group meeting was held on Monday 26th September, to discuss the results from the Work-based activity survey and to use the findings from the review to formulate recommendations. The findings of the review are included on the report prepared by the task group a draft of which is attached at Annex A. The report includes the methodology used to undertake this review and the findings. The task group concluded that of the complex system of factors which influence the weight of any individual, the two key factors are the choices people make about the food they eat – what they eat, the quality and quantity, and their level of activity – how much and how often do they exercise.

The recommendations agreed by the task group are:

That the Commissioning Board should include consideration of the following items in the preparation of the Sport and Active Lives Strategy

- Review the policy for the scheduling of activities and sessions held at the Councils sport and leisure facilities to encourage residents to more easily access opportunities to participate eg for those with young families explore scheduling activities for children at the same time as those which appeal to parents or carers, reinstating early bird sessions for those who work.
- Review pricing policies to encourage people to return to exercise or activities, particularly team activities, eg discounted taster sessions, discounted multi-buy tickets
- To encourage people to re-engage with activities through the use of introductory sessions at council facilities and encourage community facilities to offer similar sessions eg. Free or discounted taster or 'come and try it' sessions.
- That further research be undertaken with sports clubs and providers to make sure their views and experiences are fully represented in the new strategy, as concern was expressed over the low response rate to this particular survey. Perhaps through the use of focus groups or by visiting some of the clubs and interviewing key people.

And that the Council more generally should:

- Extend the availability of walks and cycle routes through GP surgeries eg promote the AONB circular walks guides in the local practices
- Promote walking and cycling routes to residents through the Councils website
- Make the most of any future opportunities to influence GP commissioning groups to offer exercise on prescription and patient referral to sports centres
- Promote the Lunchtime Activity Packs supplied to local businesses within the council for the benefit of staff and linking to the Health and Wellbeing programme.

## 7.0 SUBJECT FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEW

- 7.1 At the July meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee it was agreed that the scope for the next scrutiny review should be agreed before the current reviews are completed, to enable the review to begin promptly. It was also agreed that given the levels of Council resources required to undertake a review, only one review would be undertaken at any time. The members of the Committee requested that a draft scope be prepared for each of the following topics and these are below for discussion:

### **Supporting a sustainable Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Ryedale**

7.2 The questions to be addressed by the review could include consideration of the following questions:

- What is the current profile of the VCS in Ryedale?
- How sustainable is the sector in Ryedale and what is the role of the Council in this?
- How does the Council commission or procure work from the VCS, how is this funded, what is expected and what is the impact of this work?
- What expectations are there of the VCS in the current policy and funding environment and how can these best be met whilst delivering value for money for both the Council and the communities of Ryedale?
- Is there potential to increase the co-ordination of funding to the VCS both within the Council and with external partners?
- Can savings be made from the grants budget?
- Are there any grants that are not cost effective to administer?

7.3 Consideration would be made of existing data and evidence, national research on the impact of recent policy decisions made by the government on the VCS and any local research undertaken. This could include:

- Reviews undertaken previously by the Council
- Reviews undertaken by other local authorities
- Government policy and the impact of reviews of funding arrangements

### **The Options for Renewable Energy Use in Ryedale**

7.4 The scope of the review could include consideration of the following questions:

- What is renewable energy?
- What is the extent of use of renewable energy in Ryedale currently?
- What is the scope for developing sources of renewable energy in Ryedale, the challenges and the opportunities?
- Is there any link between small scale renewable energy projects and alleviation of fuel poverty in rural areas?
- What are the national, regional and local policies affecting renewable energy and how have they been applied locally in Ryedale?
- Do we need to consider changes to the Councils policies affecting development of renewable energy?

7.5 Consideration would be made of existing data and evidence, national research undertaken in relation to renewable energy and policy developments anticipated more locally. This could include:

- The Renewable Energy Review - Commission on Climate Change (Sept 2010)
- National Planning Policy
- Local planning policy

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**Background Papers:****Post Offices:**

Securing the Post Office Network in the Digital Age

Research summary and other papers available in Transformation Team

**Healthy Weight:**

Presentation on the current position in Ryedale – Greg McGrath, Health Improvement Manager, NHS North Yorkshire and York

Study of Childhood Obesity Scrutiny Reviews by the Centre for Public Scrutiny

Profiling and data related to healthy weight in Ryedale and Nationally

Sport England – Project Experience of Sport – Understanding the lapsed target - 2008

Papers available in Transformation Team

**Background Papers available for inspection at:**

Transformation Office – Ryedale House