

**STATEMENT BY COUNCILLOR JANE KENYON  
CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROCUREMENT & LEGAL**

**FINANCE**

**Local Taxation & Recovery**

Preparations for the issue of the annual Council Tax and Business Rates bills for 2011/12 have begun. The level of Council Tax charges will be set at the Council's meeting on 25 February, with the new bills being issued by mid March.

Business Ratepayers who currently receive Small Business Rate Relief will see their entitlement continue at the current level until 30 September 2011, when the scheme to temporarily increase the level of relief ceases. After this date, the scheme reverts to back to a maximum of 50% relief for properties with a Rateable Value up to £6,000. Any ratepayers who would like more information about the qualifying criteria for relief and application forms should contact the Local Taxation Section on 01723 232378.

Ratepayers with empty business rated properties where the Rateable Value is between £2,600 and £17,999 have benefited from a temporary increase in the exemption threshold. As from 1 April 2011, the threshold is reduced to £2,600 and the full charge will become payable if no other categories of exemption apply. Further information on this is available to any ratepayers concerned about how they may be affected from the Local Taxation Section.

At the 13 February 2011, 96.23% of the Council Tax and 95.30% of the Business Rates due for 2010/11 had been collected. Compared to the previous financial year, this equates to an increase the amount collected to date, in monetary terms of £108,291 and £169,833 respectively.

The Council has seen the number of cases subject to recovery action and number of claims for Council Tax benefit rise. Even in this climate, an improvement in collection has been achieved by reviewing procedures and targeting resources so that more prompt action is taken in many cases to effect payment in full or agree a suitable arrangement to clear the debt over a period of time.

**Benefits**

As well as the major changes to Local Housing Allowance from April, Benefits staff are expecting a number of enquiries from people claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit when annual entitlement letters are posted next month due to reductions in entitlement in many cases caused by non-dependant deduction rates set by the government increasing for the first time in 10 years.

People affected are those who are entitled to Housing or Council Tax Benefit and also have an adult living in their property who is not a spouse/partner.

The non-dependant rates are linked to income bands with the highest weekly deduction of £60.60 (increased from £47.75) for Housing Benefit and £8.60 for

Council tax Benefit (increased from £6.95) only applicable where the gross weekly income of the non-dependant is £387 or more. The lowest deduction of £9.40 for Housing Benefit (increased from £7.40) and £2.85 for Council tax Benefit (increased from £2.30) is based on gross weekly income under £122 per week.

## **PROCUREMENT, PRINT & DESIGN**

The team have built on their role supporting the Procurement Joint Committee for Scarborough, Ryedale and Selby by letting framework contracts on a joint basis with other North Yorkshire District Councils, City of York Council and the Hospital Trust.

The YORbuild construction framework agreement is proving successful in providing procurement efficiencies across Yorkshire and the Humber and monitoring and supporting the creation of local jobs. Progress is being made toward consultancy and civils framework contracts that supports the construction framework agreement.

The Print Unit are implementing the delivery of a market place website which will facilitate more efficient calling off of print work both within and without the Council. This site is anticipated to be set within a website for the Procurement Joint Committee Councils under the banner "Procure North Yorkshire".

## **LEGAL**

The Service continues to be stretched by a significant number of demands from internal and external clients.

Current projects include:

- The Middle Deepdale development
- The Sands Development
- Disposal of the Dean Road site
- The Casino Licensing Application
- A number of major Planning applications and s106 Agreements
- Litigation to which the Council is party
- The Spa Sea Defence project
- The preparation of contracts to meet the Council's efficiency agenda

This together with the day to day work undertaken by the service continues to test the resources of the service.