

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****24 February 2016****LEADER'S STATEMENT**

## Settlement

The announcement of the final settlement was later than ever before this year, but I'm grateful to the Secretary of State and the Chancellor for listening to our concerns about the difficulties rural councils faced, especially in North Yorkshire. I would also like to thank our North Yorkshire MP's for the part they played in this. The Secretary of State has made some welcome concessions in the form of £15m of transitional relief. Clearly that still leaves the County Council with a significant financial challenge which we will consider later in today's agenda.

For the first time in my memory we had to activate our Reserve Date to allow for time to properly consider the detail of the settlement, and I thank Members for their understanding. I wrote to all District Leaders apologising if they had to postpone their budget setting meetings.

## Flooding

Speaking with the Leader of Cumbria County Council just prior to Christmas to establish in my mind what mutual aid we might be able to offer post their floods, I was not aware that on Boxing Day we would be facing the same crisis. We were in fact fortunate that although at one point half our 5000 mile road network was adversely affected, North Yorkshire did not suffer to the same extent as other areas, nor that the rest of the County did not get hit as badly as the southern part. Of course that is no consolation if your house is flooded, or your business closed. We are helping to manage the process of paying compensation to householders and to businesses, but only for those who have been flooded. We are also managing to address the immediate infrastructure impacts of flooding, notably Tadcaster and the A59 at Kex Gill.

Other colleagues can report in more detail on the impact of flooding, but I want to place on record the thanks that must go to the many staff who gave up their Christmas leave to work tirelessly then, and afterwards, to look after our community in our hour of need. We can be rightly proud of their commitment and their diligence.

Longer term we must prepare to cope with more flooding by slowing the flow upstream to protect areas downstream, to build in more resilience to our teams, and to bypass Kex Gill if at all possible.

## Peer review

I am confident that we have a robust performance management regime here at NYCC, with close working and challenge existing between Executive, Management Board and Overview & Scrutiny. Local performance can also be checked by Area Committees. Additionally we are subject to outside inspections by bodies such as Ofsted, CQC etc. The LGA offer a peer review process that exposes us to some further outside scrutiny, and I have invited them to visit us for a week in March. This

is “free” in as much as it is part of our paid membership of the LGA. The small team is made up of a County Council Leader and Chief Executive, and other senior officers who know how County Councils work. They will visit some of our partners as part of this process, and will also interview Members with varying roles and from all political groupings. They will visit one Area Committee in that week. Once we have received their findings we will share them, and any necessary actions, with Members.

## Devolution

There is little progress to report as part of the region still refuses to join with the rest. Work still continues in preparing our role as either part of Greater Yorkshire, or as a smaller part in partnership with York and East Yorkshire, with Councils working together on various workstreams. Discussions have been held with civil servants.

However there are some key principles we need to hold to, namely:-

that economic growth and increased prosperity should be an opportunity for all the North Yorkshire residents we serve, and

that this opportunity should not be stifled by political opportunism.

I believe central government holds to these principles too.

Devolution will be the subject of the March seminar where the options and issues can be explored in full detail.

Carl Les  
Leader

February, 2016