

COUNCIL – 7 NOVEMBER 2022

STATEMENT BY CLLR STEVE SIDONS LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND DEVOLUTION

The preparations for the new unitary council for North Yorkshire continue at pace and many of our officers continue to lead – or at least support – the key work streams. Members may be aware that a consultation programme, called ‘Let’s Talk’ is underway. The team setting up the new authority is promoting it as ‘North Yorkshire’s biggest conversation’. Our residents have already been offered the chance to have their say on local services and now attention is turning to the issue of devolution.

Local government reorganisation continues to place demands on the time and expertise of our officers but they are being supported by the leadership team. Separately, the chief executive of the county council has published the proposed senior officer structure for the future North Yorkshire Council. This gives a clear indication of the working arrangement and service groupings from 1 April next year.

I am disappointed to report that the developer planning a four star plus hotel on the site of the former swimming pool in the North Bay has decided to withdraw his offer. I understand this is because he feels that North Yorkshire County Council will not be supportive of the scheme.

As Members will be aware, although Scarborough Borough Council continues to be a sovereign authority, we now have to get approval from North Yorkshire County Council for larger capital and revenue projects in spite of their being within our approved budgets and fully funded. This is known as Section 24 approval. Our Council has a number of regeneration schemes which are in the pipeline and are expected to deliver inward investment, jobs and opportunities for the Borough. I will continue to work with the County Council to ensure those projects continue and deliver the benefits this area so desperately needs.

OTHER MATTERS

I continue to work with the LGA Peer Team carrying out reviews for other local authorities. As Members will be aware, peer reviews are not a formal assessment of another authority. The review team is invited in by the host council and is there as a critical friend. Many councils have similar challenges to Scarborough, and it is useful to swap notes – and provide support – to another council leader, chief executive and the officer leadership team. Peer reviews are also useful for bringing ideas back to Scarborough. I believe it reflects positively on the work we are all doing in our authority by being asked to support others.

Now that we are in November, attention is turning to festive activities. I want to draw attention to what will be a bigger and better display of Christmas lights in Scarborough this year. This includes dressing the Brunswick and Pavilion House. Creating the right atmosphere to encourage people into the town centre is so important, especially when local businesses and retailers need support the most. In recognition of our climate responsibilities, I can reassure members that the light displays use modern LED technology which means they are very low energy, have minimal impact on the environment and are very inexpensive to run. The official switch on is 18 November.

I was very pleased to be able to attend the formal Alderman and Freeman of the Borough ceremony at Town Hall in Scarborough in October. The in person event was a long time coming because of coronavirus restrictions in 2020. It was a fantastic opportunity to formally recognise the achievement of former councillors and an individual who has made a significant contribution to our borough. I would like to draw members' attention to the news section of our website which has the full story and pictures from the event. My congratulations go to all of those honoured.

Councillor Hazel Lynskey recently passed away after a short illness. A service took place in St Mary's Church, Scarborough which was packed with her friends, colleagues and those people who had known Hazel over a long and illustrious career both in her personal life, and public life as a councillor and former, three times, Mayor of the Borough. Hazel will be greatly missed, not only by me, but by all those people who knew her.

I am pleased to report that the refurbishment of South Cliff Gardens continues to make progress. Handovers of completed sections of works are ongoing throughout the gardens. Most areas, including the Operations Building have now been handed over. The summer programme of activity and events was enjoyed by over 2500 people of whom 704 were children. Unfortunately, works to the Clock Tower are now delayed until at least December after more defects were found within the structure. Engineers are developing solutions to address these issues.