

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 MAY 2022

THIS STATEMENT COVERS THE PERIOD FROM THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2022 TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS ON 5 MAY 2022

STATEMENT OF CLLR CARL LES

Covid

This remains an ever present threat to us. Fortunately cases seem less severe and less life threatening, but our hospitals are fully committed to handling cases and this maintains pressure on other essential and elective procedures. We must hope that the vaccination programme continues to mitigate the impact as we learn to live with Covid. We must never forget that whatever we face now, with somewhat less severity, 1499 people in the County have lost their lives with Covid 19 on their death certificates

Team North Yorkshire

Part of that learning has been the remarkable co-operation and collaboration between all services in North Yorkshire, statutory, voluntary and business sectors. I said in my first interview over 2 ½ years ago now that I was glad I lived in North Yorkshire and I repeat that sentiment today

Make Care Matter

The care sector has also faced huge pressures throughout this council period, both from Covid taking out staff, and also the vacancies carried even before the pandemic. I am pleased that the recruitment campaign we started, which also helps our valued colleagues in the private sector providing care, has worked and needs to continue. The campaign reached over 2.5 million viewers, driving 10,000 enquiries to our recruitment website, which led to 1757 job applications, 327 interviews and to date 131 new starters. Whilst these new starters are welcomed, with growing demand for services and an ageing workforce there remains the need for hundreds more people to join the care sector in North Yorkshire

Trailblazer

One of the last acts the Executive took in the last Council was to accept the government's invitation to be part of a Trailblazer pilot into the costs of care, and who pays it. The timing was such that an expression of interest had to be confirmed before the new Council came into being. This Council has an unenviable record of working with Government to trial and shape future initiatives, either singly or through our role in national bodies like CCN, ADSS etc. It will be for this Executive to decide whether to proceed with this, or exercise the break clause we negotiated for this purpose. For my part I hope we continue.

Ukrainian evacuees

A small number of evacuees have arrived in our County. With our District Council partners and others we stand ready to receive and welcome refugees from Putin's outrageous war.

LGR, Devolution and Levelling Up

Apart from the successful proposition that unitarisation reduces confusion, inefficiency, duplication and cost, a key decision to continue with LGR was that it unlocked devolution, in itself linked with levelling up principles and missions. Our asks were submitted some time ago now, they have been refreshed by the LEP, and a visit has happened with senior civil servants coming to meet senior officers. What is clear is that all asks will need to be negotiated with vigour – the principle of devolution has been agreed, there is no automatic right of passage. Myself and the Leader of City of York Council have had a first meeting with the responsible Minister where he observed that we were first in the queue and he hoped we would maintain that position. There is a possibility that a deal can be done before the Parliamentary summer recess. Game on!

Finally

As the previous Council draws to a close, I would like to thank all colleagues who have demonstrated diligence and a determination to make North Yorkshire a better place for our residents, our communities and our businesses. The new Council faces an exciting future, the biggest change since 1974, and the election will have decided who faces that challenge. Regardless of our political changes our officer corps continues to work to best endeavours and we must thank them for their service.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES