

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20 JULY 2022

STATEMENT OF CLLR CARL LES

Cost of living crisis

This Council must do all it can itself to help those vulnerable residents in our community . Importantly we must ensure that our support services are ready and resourced to help those who need it, along with our network of partners in district and borough councils, and especially in the voluntary sector. David Chance will give more detail in his statement. We need to recognise that the same costs that are affecting households and businesses are also affecting our budgets – general inflation, especially in supply chains, food costs, and specific sector inflation such as energy costs, oil and motor fuel. Clearly we will have a difficult budget process to manage at the turn of the year, but the domestic crisis is now.

Ukrainian refugees

David will also give details about how we are providing the wrap around care needed by Ukrainian refugees and the other migration initiatives in our area. I am humbled by the many residents who have opened up their homes and their hearts to welcome refugees, but I fear it will be a long and continuing process as the unwarranted and brutal incursion into another sovereign nation shows no sign of abating. We will need to help those people who have made that commitment, but whose circumstances may have changed themselves.

Climate change

Members who attended the most recent seminar will have seen the progress the Council is making in playing its part in addressing climate change. There is more to be done in developing our own plan and working with the LEP. I said in the last council I will make a progress statement at each Council meeting and will continue to do so in this – in that respect I refer Members to the information given out last Wednesday as my statement this time. There is more to be done, across the Council in all our services and activities, and our plan reflects that. Greg has the key responsibility on the Executive for this topic, and his statement reflects that, but it is a responsibility we all share.

LGR

Work continues apace on this. 9 months, 2 weeks and 2 days to vesting day as I write this. Officer led work streams are developing options for the new Council to choose, and (subject to Council agreement) we will now introduce a new time-limited Overview and Scrutiny Committee to assist in the implementation of the new Council's activities so that on Day One our services are both "safe and legal" and importantly with no discernible difference to the customer.

As discussed elsewhere, we will also set up Member led working groups in the following areas, with lead members as follows:-

Locality working and Committee governance – Greg White
Planning – Simon Myers

Customer – David Chance
Waste management – Mark Crane
Member support and the role of the Councillor – Gareth Dadd
Licencing – Derek Bastiman
Council Tax harmonisation – Cliff Lunn

Devolution

I congratulate our team of officers from County, District and the LEP for the negotiations they have undertaken with senior civil servants from across government to arrive at the basis of an initial devolution deal. I say initial because it is important that this is seen for what it is - the first step in a process we have been pursuing for some time now. It is an important, vital part, especially fixing the quantum of gain share for the next 30 years, but all around us Mayors and MCA`s have been moving on from their initial deals with increasing continuing success in gaining funding and support for new initiatives. Members have been appraised of the elements of the deal, and the priorities that have been addressed, although these remain confidential until the deal is finalised. There was a real fear that the political turbulence in Westminster could delay the deal being finalised but I am hopeful that new Ministers will recognise the enormous amount of effort put into this, and will sign it off. This will allow us to proceed to the next step of public involvement. It is my intention that although this is an Executive function, it should be brought to a full Council meeting at the appropriate time for ratification and support.

Great British Rail HQ

The government intends that the HQ of the new company to run our railways should not be in London. 42 places put forward suggestions, including York. I have been supportive of York as the venue from the day the intention was announced. This is not only because of the historic connections York has with railways, since the days of George Hudson, or its geographic location at a crossroads of North South and East West connections. This is much more about the technological, engineering, and intellectual capacity in York with a host of firms and 2 Universities. Moreover there is available land and offices already in railway industry possession. The business case is clear in my mind, and will benefit the North Yorkshire economy as well as York`s. A short list of 6 locations has been announced, for a public expression of support, so can I encourage all members to vote for York, and to use our networks to get out the vote too. A successful move to York will be an excellent example of levelling up in practice.

The website for voting is [GBR National HQ Competition – Public vote / Great British Railways Transition Team \(gbrtt.co.uk\)](https://www.gbrtt.co.uk)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES