

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**16 NOVEMBER 2022**

### **STATEMENT OF CLLR CARL LES**

#### **New Prime Minister**

I am very pleased to welcome Rishi Sunak to his position as Prime Minister, not only as a North Yorkshire MP who has detailed knowledge and understanding of a large rural constituency and its issues within a large rural County, but also because as Local Government Minister in a previous administration, he developed a real understanding of how local government works, its value to the country, and the challenges we face.

I look forward to further constructive dialogue with the PM and his team of Ministers, and congratulate in particular Kevin Hollinrake on his promotion to a Ministerial position in BEIS. That said, the challenges they, and the country, face are enormous. Economic recovery following the global pandemic, climate change, a territorial war in Europe, I'm sure we can all add our concerns to the list.

The factors that are producing the cost of living crisis for all our residents are also factors that impact upon this Council – supply chain inflation, increases in interest rates world-wide, energy prices, food inflation and security – and I believe we will face the most difficult budget setting time this year that any of us in the Chamber have had to deal with before. Our services to the vulnerable will be ever more essential.

The Autumn Statement will give us an indication, but we will have to wait until the settlement figures are released prior to Christmas to know the real position

#### **Let`s Talk**

As we prepare for the new Council, we have launched the largest consultation we have ever undertaken to capture the views of our residents.

Split in to 3 sections

Let`s Talk Local  
Let`s Talk Devolution  
Let`s Talk Money

it`s important that we encourage our residents, our businesses, and our community groups to engage in that process. Early indications are that they are.

There are other discrete consultations taking place, for instance on taxi licencing, and again we need to encourage participation.

#### **LGR preparations**

As I write this there are 150 days to go to vesting day, 105 if you only count traditional working days, although I don`t think preparations are only taking place on working days. The numerous working groups , both officer ones and Members` working groups, are very busy preparing options for the new Council to determine how it will do its business, with the stated

aims of being safe and legal, absolutely vital, and also just as important no discernible difference in service delivery to the resident or customer.

I think we should recognise and applaud the enormous amount of work that our staff, and the staff of our 7 districts / boroughs, are putting in to make the transition as smooth as possible, and also the work that Members are doing.

The potential savings from LGR will never be more needed.

### **Investment Zones**

This has been covered at the recent Members` briefing, so I won`t elaborate on detail. I don`t like using urgency powers, bypassing Overview & Scrutiny, Executive reports and decisions, and Call-In, but the timescale on this initiative was impossibly tight to do anything other. Sustainable growth is a worthy aspiration and I gave some Members assurance that we would not sacrifice planning and environmental considerations, relying rather on central government taxation benefits to accelerate investment in the sites put forward by our Districts, and thanks to them for their quick reaction. If the initiative continues, and it is now under review by the new Secretary of State, then it will follow our normal procedures. In using urgency powers, I was conscious we could only join in by meeting the deadline, but we could withdraw at any time.

### **Finally.....**

Although Christmas goods, including mince pies, have been in the shops for some weeks now, it seems very early at this meeting to be sending folk traditional wishes, but it is our last Council before Christmas. I have listed above many reasons why it might not be appropriate to wish people a Merry Christmas this year, rather a Safe and Peaceful one, but I`m conscious that however difficult our circumstances will be in the coming months, the people of Ukraine face a more serious set of circumstances as they deal with an illegal, territorial, inhuman aggression.

Whoever thought that the expansionist invasions of the 1930`s and `40`s would happen again in Europe. I wish all the Ukranian people, whether at home or displaced, a speedy end to their conflict, and that Peace and Prosperity can once again exist in their sovereign nation.

CARL LES