

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

22 February 2023

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE TRANSITION (LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION) COMMITTEE

The Transition (LGR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee was constituted back in July 2022 to work alongside the existing five overview and scrutiny committees undertaking their 'business as usual' work, but with a particular focus on helping to shape the development of the new unitary authority.

The committee has met twice since the last meeting of the County Council, on 14 December 2022 and 19 January 2023.

The December meeting took place at Hambleton DC to consider the proposed taxi licensing policy and conditions for North Yorkshire Council. Following a presentation providing an overview of the draft policy by officers, questions were asked about a number of issues, such as the proposed ten year limit for vehicle renewal applications, the standards required for executive vehicles and the requirements for the wearing of seatbelts, and what are the requirements for a practical driving assessment and local knowledge test for new drivers in North Yorkshire. Following this, a snapshot of the consultation responses received to date was given to members. It was a comprehensive discussion on an important issue and I'd like to thank the council officers from Harrogate, Selby and Ryedale for attending.

The committee also held a discussion at this meeting about progress with Local Government Reorganisation. It was noted that good progress was felt to have been made during the transition period to the formation of the new unitary council on 1st April, but it was acknowledged that the initial priority was to achieve 'safe and legal' at day 1 of the new council, ahead of any major service transformation and cost savings.

On 19 January 2023, members met again to receive a presentation on the plans for the Economic Development service leading up to Local Government Reorganisation and into the future. This was a topic that committee members had shown a keen interest in exploring, with issues considered including progress with transferring the current eight services into one countywide offer, whilst retaining business continuity and momentum on delivery. There was also a focus on developing a new Economic Growth strategy for North Yorkshire, how business support would be carried out across the county under the new authority and the approach to be taken on tourism, to ensure the strategies and objectives for coastal areas are different to the more urban areas.

It is clear that this opportunity to become one countywide service is an exciting one that will give leverage to future funding bids and projects within the directorate and allow a fresh look at how Economic Development is delivered across the county. There were concerns raised by members on tourism, around retaining the focus on an individual place-based approach as part of any future service offer, particularly for locations that are tourism dependant, whilst tapping into the opportunities that will come from having a consistent message across the county to attract visitors to stay, explore and enjoy North Yorkshire as a destination.

An update was also received on the work of the IT and Digital Workstream, focusing on what day 1 will look like. In particular, delivering an ICT foundation that looks, feels and operates as a single council for day 1, with single versions of business/corporate applications (e.g. single email system, single website, single front door for IT support). Progress on some of the

projects to deliver day 1 were highlighted, such as developing a secure email solution, implementing digital forms and ensuring data governance arrangements are not just in place but robust. With a workstream as significant and complex as this, it was also helpful to consider the risks associated with delivery, such as minimising the threat of cyber-attacks during the transition period as much as possible and having insufficient time and resource to deliver the Microsoft 365 migration project, whilst also recognising the controls and mitigations that have been put in place. I'd like to thank Stuart Carlton, Workstream Sponsor for ICT & Digital, along with the officers from across the county council and the district and borough councils for attending the meeting, as it was clear that there has been careful planning and collaborative work put in to deliver across a wide range of areas under this workstream.

A presentation was also delivered by Robert Ling, LGR Programme Director on day 1 delivery and continuity of service. The emphasis was on progress towards achieving a safe and legal status for the new authority and the plans looking ahead towards a future transformation period and what that might look like. This service delivery part of the LGR programme is also combined with bringing staff members from the eight predecessor councils together to feel well supported and understand the expectations as part of the new North Yorkshire Council, whilst potential risks around service continuity are managed, reduced or removed. This was an important update for the committee and provided reassurance for members ahead of the final run up to vesting day.

The final update received on 19 January was on the property workstream, again with the aim of achieving safe and legal on day one with transformation work to be implemented afterwards. It was noted that the new unitary council will be responsible for circa 2,500 non-HRA property assets, with an objective to produce a comprehensive asset management / property strategy that identifies all issues, risks and opportunities to understand the requirements of services. There was a discussion amongst members about the 'hubs' in key locations across North Yorkshire and how these will operate and be maintained going forwards, particularly with regards to health and safety. The variety of the property assets to be held by the new council will be vast, with the formation of a comprehensive asset management strategy following vesting day set to be a key priority to bring forward.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR MALCOLM TAYLOR
CHAIRMAN TRANSITION (LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION) OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 February 2023