

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**15 NOVEMBER 2023**

### **STATEMENT OF THE LEADER COUNCILLOR CARL LES**

#### **Transition**

The new council has only been operational for little over seven months – somehow it feels longer! Work continues apace to consolidate and develop the new council. Almost all appointments across the head of service level have now been made. It is pleasing to see that the talents across the predecessor councils feature in these appointments. Major service restructures will follow over the next year – with many in the next six months. This will be a significant period of change as officers come together to form single service teams where there was previously seven or eight.

In addition to this restructuring the long-term work of establishing new systems and processes has begun. The council has made good progress developing its policies and strategies to guide our work and some of these features in the Executive Member reports. Overall progress on transition remains to be good and I am grateful for the work and understanding of officers who are leading and operating through this challenging period of change.

#### **Devolution**

We were expecting to hear any moment that the legislative order to bring about the North Yorkshire and York Mayoral Combined Authority would be laid in Parliament. This has now been confirmed as 7 November 2023. This should lead to the formal creative of the MCA early in the New Year. Whilst the legislative process takes place we have been working collaboratively with our colleagues at the City of York, the LEP and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners office. Preparatory work for the new authority is going well. A Joint Committee jointly chaired by myself and the Leader of City of York, Claire Douglas, oversees this work. It is particularly pleasing to see that some of the financial opportunity from Devolution is coming to fruition with announcements already made on grant funding for low carbon energy schemes with more soon to come around housing opportunities. – it is also good to see that the leadership of the MCA is raising interest in this chamber!

#### **Scarborough Bathing Water Summit**

The reputation of Scarborough as a holiday destination is of utmost importance to the council as well as the opportunity for visitors and local people alike to enjoy safely swimming in the two beautiful bays of the resort. There have for many years been on-going problems with bathing water quality in Scarborough South Bay which has made many difficult headlines during the course of this summer. In order to try and get a grip on this issue the council convened a summit of interested parties which I Chaired on the 9 October 2023 in Scarborough. We had around the table with members of this council key partners with responsibility for bathing water quality. These included the Chief Executive and the team

from Yorkshire Water, senior officials from the Environment Agency and Government representatives from businesses and the local MP Sir Robert Goodwill. In addition, the council had appointed its own expert from Durham University to advise the council and also to introduce some of their own research.

The council is not the lead player in this issue however, we felt that it was important to use our convening power to try and move forward this enduring and difficult issue. The discussion was positive, and a range of important actions were acknowledged such as the very significant investment that McCains have put into their own water outflow cleansing plant and future actions already in the pipeline were acknowledged such as planned investment by Yorkshire Water. In addition, new actions were put in place significantly around two programmes of in-depth monitoring and analysis, one to be led by the Environment Agency and the second to be commissioned by the council through Durham University. We hope that this work will lead to further actions to improve the water quality and to help target investment by partners such as Yorkshire Water. The issues are complex and with a long history and will not be solved overnight but I feel that the summit has helped to galvanise the right collective actions from partners to tackle the issue.

### **North Yorkshire Wider Partnership Conference**

On the 27 October 2023 the council staged the first Wider Partnership Conference as a new unitary council. It is a great opportunity to bring together members of the voluntary and community sector with a range of other partners to be alongside the council and to consider a range of issues affecting our communities. Around 120 people came together including a number of Members of this council to consider some of the challenges that our communities face but also to recognise and pay tribute to the volunteers in our communities who support many vulnerable people and provide the backbone of so much community infrastructure. The North Yorkshire Community Awards brought many poignant stories to the fore including a gentleman who had volunteered in his own community for over 70 years.

### **Pension Fund Committee**

We do not often highlight individual members efforts; however, we will appoint a new Chair of the Pension Fund Committee today. I would like to pay tribute of the leadership of Councillor John Weighell in this regard. The performance of the fund is largely due to the advice given by our advisors, but there is not doubt John's calm and considered style has contributed to that performance.

### **Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)**

The York & North Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) has now received its accreditation from Visit England. This new partnership will pave the way for a more coordinated approach to supporting the visitor economy and we are looking forward to working closely with Make it York and City of York Council to maximise this opportunity.

COUNCILLOR CARL LES