

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**18 March 2026**

### **STATEMENT OF COUNCILLOR CARL LES**

#### **Salvete et Valet**

At this meeting we say goodbye and thank you to two of our senior directors, Richard Webb and Gary Fielding. Both have delivered excellent results for our residents in North Yorkshire County Council and latterly North Yorkshire Council. Richard has led HAS with distinction, most recently overseeing our results in the new CQC inspection, “Good”, where we scored 81 out of a 100, and third highest nationally. We wish him well as the Chief Executive at City of York Council.

Eric Pickles when Secretary of State is purported to have once said that only two people understood local government finance – one had just died, and the other had gone mad. I’m pleased that neither of these apply to Gary! Over the years Gary has brought a clarity to the role to the benefit of all us Members, especially myself. With the skillset he has developed recently it is no surprise that he has been recruited and leaves us for his native county as Lancashire County Council and its successor councils come to terms with the issues we faced in LGR.

Both officers will be missed, but I’m pleased to welcome El Mayhew and Abi Barron.

El has joined us to replace Sir Stuart Carlton as Corporate Director for CYPS. She has come to us with a wide range of experience from a Director’s role in Hertfordshire County Council, following a secondment as Director to Suffolk County Council, and positions in Surrey CC, the London Boroughs of Merton, Lambeth and Bexley and other councils with a more rural nature to them.

Abigail Barron has been appointed as the new Corporate Director for HAS, leading on public health, adult social care and NHS partnerships. Abi has lived and worked in North Yorkshire for the majority of her career working in both the NHS and Adult Social Care. Her early career was spent working in the NHS delivering community services across the County, progressing into Adult Social Care in 2019. Abi’s most recent role was Assistant Director for Service Development.

As you will expect we have started the recruitment process for Gary’s role already.

#### **NYC 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday and National Recognition:**

As we approach April 2026, North Yorkshire Council will soon turn three years old. This is a significant milestone for the Council, and it is easy to forget that just under 3 years ago, we embarked on the largest undertaking of local government reorganisation to date, whilst at the same time, securing a landmark devolution deal for the region. Colleagues only need to look elsewhere in the country to reflect on how successful the process of LGR was here in North Yorkshire.

An early focus of this Council has been to harness the economies of scale afforded to us through LGR to deliver value for money and high-quality services to our residents and businesses. Therefore, it has been pleasing to have our efforts recognised on the national

stage by independent public sector consultants IMPOWER. IMPOWER's tables on performance name North Yorkshire Council as the most productive council in the North of England and in the top three nationally. At the same time, North Yorkshire Council has also been shortlisted as Council of the Year at both the LGC Awards and the MJ Awards.

This national recognition is a testament to our staff and collective efforts to deliver real value for communities across our county. Maintaining high productivity and performance standards will help contribute to protecting our frontline services and looking ahead, this will remain a focus for the Council. This is a good accolade for a council approaching its 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

### **Established Mayoral Strategic Authority Status**

With regards to the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, it has been agreed that York and North Yorkshire will apply for 'Established Mayoral Strategic Authority' status. This is the most developed level of devolution outlined in the most recent English Devolution Bill. Established Status, already conferred onto authorities in Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire to name a few, would see the Combined Authority receive additional powers, including the Right to Request – a power to request changes in legislation. Importantly it will mean the CA being eligible for further funding streams often without the need for a bidding process. This is good news as we all know it takes as much time and effort to write the bid that fails as the one that succeeds.

Established Status would also mean that the Combined Authority would be eligible for an Integrated Settlement. We are keen to see further information on this matter, and to understand what greater funding flexibility could mean for investing in priorities here in North Yorkshire. It is important to note that further reports will be brought to the Combined Authority looking at this in greater detail. Civil servants in MHCLG will now be looking through the detail of the bid to become an Established Strategic Authority, which can only be given once the English Devolution Bill receives Royal Assent.

COUNCILLOR CARL LES