

Report to Full Council from the Leader of the Council

Since my last report to Full Council, a great deal of work has taken place to drive forward the aspirations detailed within the Council Plan, as well as continue our efforts to recover from the pandemic. However, over the past few months, we have seen some national issues have an impact on the city, including some interruptions to supply chains, to staff shortages in HGV drivers and social care workers.

With these challenges to overcome, we are now entering what will be a difficult winter period for many, and therefore, it is likely to remain a busy period for the Council. Nonetheless, I know that despite any difficulties, our staff, key workers, city partners, volunteers and local residents will once again overcome these challenges. Therefore, whilst there is much to be done, here in York, there is always good reason to be hopeful.

Devolution in York and North Yorkshire:

The Council is continuing to work with Councils across York and North Yorkshire, alongside the LEP, to make progress on securing a devolution deal. In recent weeks, Government Ministers have confirmed that they see a Mayoral Combined Authority as the appropriate model of devolution for York and North Yorkshire. In response, we have written to confirm our desire to work with Government to move forward on devolution, examining all options and we continue to work with officials to identify what will be the best deal for York, which would then be widely consulted upon.

We expect a Levelling Up White Paper to be published around the time of the Autumn Budget (27 October), which hopefully will give greater clarity on the Government's future policy framework for devolution. We have no reason to expect that devolution (particularly through elected mayors) will cease to be an element of this and a way in which regions can bring greater local control to decision-making and certainty of funding.

Once we receive further detail and clarity from the Government, we will ensure all Councillors and partners are briefed on the available options moving forward.

Covid-19:

With regards to the current Covid-19 situation in York, the latest official validated rate of new cases per 100,000 people, for the period from 30.9.21 to 06.10.21 in York, was 229.4 (484 cases). From this, we can see that case numbers have started to rise in the city, but this is happening nationally. When compared to the regional and national rates, York's local 60+ rate is lower and amounts to around 10% of the total cases.

The NHS 111 service frequency had reduced as well, which has been attributed to people becoming less sick when they have contracted Covid. A similar picture is also being reported by York Hospital, with 45 patients in general beds and another 3 in the intensive care unit at the time of writing this report. Some winter respiratory issues can be seen to be happening earlier this year, which has impacted on our rates.

We can see from the data that the bulk of cases were amongst children, especially since they returned to school in September. With this in mind, the majority of household cases have therefore been triggered by school aged children. There is a risk that infection could be passed on to family members who were, or worked with, the clinically vulnerable. Therefore, the Council is continuing to work closely with schools to achieve a balance between proportionate measures to allow children to attend school, while also mitigating the risk of transmission.

In response to this, the Council has recently commissioned a letter, to be sent to all households across the city, directly from the Director of Public Health and Clinical Chair of the CCG to provide helpful advice on how to limit the spread of Coronavirus and other respiratory infections this winter. The Council is also in regular communication with local businesses to offer support, whether it be interpreting the latest national

guidance, or simply providing advice on how best to reduce the spread of infection, for example, ensuring that hand sanitiser stations are in a prominent position in stores.

Integration of Health and Social Care:

July's Executive shared information about the Government's proposals to integrate health, social care and community support through Integrated Care System partnerships. For York, it is hoped that this will build on the excellent health and care partnerships which have worked so well together throughout the pandemic.

Regionally, the Humber, Coast and Vale Health and Care Partnership (HCV) became an Integrated Care System (ICS), after its application for ICS status was ratified by NHS England and NHS Improvement. HCV has just appointed their chair designate Sue Symington, Chair of York Hospital NHS Teaching Trust and we are looking forward to working with her in this new role. HCV has already confirmed they would work with local communities through the formation of six local place based partnerships, of which York is one and Sue's new appointment is hugely helpful with her detailed understanding of York's unique health needs.

In response to the Government's announcement, the Shadow York Health and Care Alliance was established and has been meeting regularly to determine how we can best support a more joined up health and social care system. The Alliance has been supporting the hospital and social care prepare for winter pressures and, as a Council, we are fully committed to working closely with partners to shape a joined up system that puts residents at its heart. More information will be shared with colleagues once available, and I look forward to discussing this important issue with members of scrutiny when we are able to.

Providing sanctuary to Afghan Refugees:

As colleagues will know, York has a proud record of providing sanctuary to those in need. Our city has previously given a new home to 81

refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme for refugees of the conflict in Syria, and now arrangements have been put in place to welcome those escaping the Taliban.

Since the announcement that NATO military forces would withdraw from Afghanistan, the Council has been working alongside the Home Office, Ministry of Defence and MHCLG to support the national effort with regard to the Locally Employed Staff (LES) scheme, which is part of the wider Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP).

Council staff have been working to ensure that we are ready to give refugees the sanctuary they need. Alongside other local authorities in the region, we are working closely with Government and Migration Yorkshire who will allocate Councils a proportion of refugee families. Once we know the families' specific needs, alongside our local key partners, we will work to provide the all the necessary support to ensure they can settle safely in the city.

Fuel Supplies:

With the recent disruption to fuel supply across the country, the Council continues to monitor the situation locally, and in doing so, mitigate any impact on services and ensure we do not inadvertently contribute to the rise in demand at the pumps. To date, there has been no noticeable impact on our services and our own fuel deliveries for waste vehicles, and the rest of the fleet, have not been affected. We have checked with our suppliers and they have confirmed that we do not need to plan for any interruptions. As colleagues would expect in this situation, we have explored both supplier and our own business continuity plans as a precautionary measure.

We have also identified those services for residents which rely on staff in private vehicles, like care visitors working in residents' homes. We have proactively contacted key services and care sector providers to understand the level of impact, and subsequently, we have offered

assistance in reorganising any essential care. Thankfully, we have had very few requests for support and the situation appears to be stabilising.

While North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum has not called a formal incident, the Council has been attending multi-agency meetings to represent the city. We will continue to monitor the situation, working with partners across the region to understand the current picture, and Councillors will be kept informed of any significant changes should they occur.

Great British Railways:

I am sure colleagues will join me in welcoming the recently announced competition regarding the future locations of the newly established Great British Railways (GBR). Before the competition was announced, City of York Council has been working jointly with North Yorkshire County Council and the LEP to make the case for York and express our interest in locating the HQ of GBR on the York Central site.

As part of this work, we have written to the DfT and Network rail to formally express our interest and to offer our assistance in identifying a suitable location in the city. As part of this early contact with the DfT and Network Rail, we have also sent evidence and detailed information about the rail industry in York and North Yorkshire, including information regarding connectivity.

We are still awaiting further detail from the Government, particularly regarding the 'rules' of the competition, but we will be sending another letter to the DfT to express our interest in the competition and to seek further information and support from yourselves. Once we have secured that detail, we will be in touch with colleagues and partners to outline the next steps.

Responding to the Government's Spending Review:

The Council has formally responded to the Government's Spending Review, which has concluded earlier this month. There is no doubt that the Autumn Budget comes at a critical time for local government. Throughout the last 2 years, Councils, including City of York, have shown their flexibility and unique positioning to support local communities through the toughest of times. But in doing so, this has taken its toll across all aspects of Council resources.

To continue to rise to the significant challenges we face, Councils now need as much certainty as possible. To genuinely facilitate recovery, we must avoid funding directed through short-term streams or one-off awards at the national level. In order to move forward, and level up our communities, we must be provided clarity through consolidated multi-year settlements which reflect the challenges being faced in our areas.

As a key funding stream for Councils, the Government's review of Business Rates is of significant interest. When the final report is published, we hope it recognises that the existing system is no longer fit for purpose, based around a model of commerce which is increasingly out of step with business. Putting in place a system which reflects 21st century business and incentivises local authorities to support business growth in new and innovative forms is critical to build back better.

At the same time, pressures within the Health and Care Sectors are already severe. Many partners, particularly within Vale of York CCG, describe the levels of activity and the challenges in sourcing care packages for hospital discharge like a severe winter. The LGA calculates that Councils across the country face annual cost pressures of £2.5 billion to maintain services at their current level of access and quality. Of this, £1.1 billion per year relates to adult social care.

The Autumn Budget must recognise all of the above and address these funding shortfalls immediately, particularly given that these challenges have been exacerbated by staffing shortages and market instability,

which remain unresolved in current Government policy. We must also receive considerable investment to ensure our residents can access good quality jobs, relevant to the recovery, or otherwise lose the opportunity to truly level up our region.

York Outer Ring Road:

Our latest plans to improve the York Outer Ring Road were recently approved in September. The York Outer Ring Road scheme is designed to improve the city's highway network, reduce congestion, move car journeys out of the city centre and enhance the pedestrian and cycle experience with improvements to sustainable transport along the network.

Extensive public consultation on the scheme was held in autumn 2020. Over 3,500 comments from residents and stakeholders were received, the evaluation of which was presented to the Executive. Within the consultation feedback, there was widespread support for the scheme's proposals, though some minor specific issues were raised around facilities at some locations for pedestrians and cyclists, which will be addressed in the subsequent design work to follow.

In response to the feedback received during the consultation, a number of changes to the scheme have now been improved, including:

- The provision of a pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities at the junction of Wigginton Road with the A1237 to improve safety and access for active travel around the roundabout
- The provision of a safeguarded route for a future orbital pedestrian/cycle route from Strensall Road junction to Monks Cross
- Diversion of Bridleway no. 4 at Huntington and provision of a Pegasus Crossing at Monks Cross junction

Haxby Station:

Significant progress continues to be made on delivering a new railway station in Haxby. Last week, the Executive agreed to purchase a plot of land as part of the project. In doing so, the additional purchase of land will help reduce the risks to the delivery of the project and put the strongest possible case forward to the Government to secure funding for a new railway station in Haxby. To support this, we have agreed that a budget of £250K to fund the purchase and associated acquisition costs.

The ambition for a new station at Haxby has been held for many years by this administration and therefore, we have been considering every step needed to make that ambition a reality. Last year, following consultation with communities, the Council submitted a bid for funding to Government to build a new railway station. In November 2020, the Government announced that £400k had been made available to fund further development work. Since then, working closely with Network Rail, the Council has been working on a strategic and business case which will help unlock the additional funding that will be necessary to deliver the railway station, with the hope that a new station could be built in 2024.

York Community Woodland:

Colleagues will be pleased to know that the future of York's new community woodland has been secured for many years to come, following the Council appointing Forestry England as our preferred delivery partner. The partnership involves Forestry England taking responsibility for woodland creation on the 194-acre site west of the city and ongoing management to a specification agreed with the Council through a long-term lease of up to 120 years, for which the Council would receive rental income.

The woodland schedule aims to plant 50,000 trees by spring 2023, eventually increasing to 80,000 to develop the natural landscape, and this incredible asset will be free for residents and visitors to enjoy. There

is mounting evidence that links green spaces with improved health and wellbeing. With paths and open spaces, the site will provide areas for walking, play and reflection. The project will boast health and wellbeing benefits, as well as promote green jobs and increase local biodiversity, creating a lasting legacy for our city.

Housing Delivery Programme:

During the course of 2021, the first residents of Lowfield Green moved into their new homes, with 30 homes now occupied and a further 53 homes to be completed this autumn/winter. The homes are highly energy efficient, giving new residents improved comfort and lower energy bills, whilst also helping to tackle climate change.

The next phase of the programme will see the Council start work on building the city's first carbon zero neighbourhoods in 2022, with new developments at Burnholme (83 homes, including five self-build properties) and Duncombe Barracks (34 homes and one commercial unit).

To build on this, Executive Members will soon be asked to consider the submission of a planning application to deliver more homes, community facilities and flexible commercial spaces at the Ordnance Lane and Hospital Fields Road site. A draft application has been prepared for 85 homes, 10 non-residential spaces including two communal spaces, two retail spaces, and six flexible spaces to be used as office, co-working, studio or maker spaces.

The Executive will also be asked to consider accepting funding of over £2.6m, following a successful grant application under the Brownfield Land Release Fund. If agreed, this grant funding will be used for the Ordnance Lane project, as well as supporting self and community build groups interested in developing the former Tang Hall Library and Chaloners Road garage court sites.

It has been encouraging to see the positive impact these new homes have had on the lives of the residents who have recently moved in and furthermore, to know that more homes will be completed in the coming weeks and months.

Community Welfare Support:

A total £228,000 has been put forward to further fund Free School Meals and provide additional support to help York residents through the coming winter months.

Following agreement at Executive last month, the Council will invest £150,000 in its Free School Meal voucher scheme to beat hunger during school holidays, and a further additional £78,000 to fund three community support schemes. Both funds are designed to help alleviate some of the financial pressures which many are expected to experience after the furlough scheme and the £20 Universal Credit uplift end this autumn.

The three schemes designed to help communities and residents to access financial and digital support will run for 12 months, and will be paid for by existing emergency funding from York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS). They include:

- An additional £20,000 Early Support Fund will be added to £40,000 of existing funding for small grants available in communities, which will be a flexible and rapid source of support for people and families facing financial crisis or who can't get the support they need. Following a pilot run over the past 18 months, the fund will be administered by the city's Local Area Coordinators;
- £35,000 Early Intervention Project will support residents to break the cycle of debt. Advisers and Council Tax, Housing and Benefits services will take a holistic view across all debts with the Council to address debt and ensure access support
- £23,220 100% Digital York Project. With 13% of York residents not online, a co-ordinator will ensure people do not suffer social

isolation or miss out the financial benefits of being online, and that they develop digital skills and tackling social isolation.

We know how worried many people are about the impending end of the £20 Universal Credit uplift and of course, the end of the furlough scheme. That is exactly why these proposals have been forward, to help alleviate that pressure. In the meantime, recognising that we simply do not have the resources to support all residents alone, we will continue to lobby the Government to request these resources and I welcome colleagues support in making that case.

ARG Business Support Funding:

At the end of August, an additional £500k was invested to create a package of support for York's independent businesses, so they could bounce back from the impact of the pandemic. £500k of York's final £1.4m instalment of the Additional restrictions Grant (ARG) was used to create a business support scheme, enabling small and micro businesses in York to relaunch and refresh with help from within the city's business community.

The voucher scheme was designed to ensure that local businesses could get up to £1000 of expertise and support from other businesses across the city – not only helping those in receipt of the vouchers, but also generating income for other local businesses.

The delivery of a York-based business support voucher scheme would continue the Council's innovative approach to business support, building on the success of the Council's Micro Business Grants Scheme which saw grants of up to £1,000 provided to 1,114 small, micro and one-person businesses during the early stages of the pandemic.

Although national Covid restrictions have lifted, this remains a very challenging time for many of our local businesses as they adjust to new economic conditions. We hope that this funding will support businesses through the transitions that companies are working through to adjust to

the new economic climate and foster a period of renewed inclusive economic stability and opportunity.

New Mural at the Community Stadium:

LNER has officially unveiled the installation of an impressive 100ft mural, inspired by different aspects of the city, at the Community Stadium. Adorning the West Stand, the mural was designed by the University of York, and captures sights from around the city including Clifford's Tower, the city walls and York Minster, as well as an Azuma train departing York station.

On visiting the stadium, the mural does indeed look fantastic and perfectly captures the spirit of the stadium and wider complex as an incredible community facility for the local community and the whole of York.

New Centre of Excellence in Smart Transport:

I was pleased to join car software pioneer ETAS to officially launch their new Centre of Excellence. The new site for ETAS Centre of Excellence for Embedded Software, on Hospital Fields Road, is the centrepiece of a £1.6 million expansion of the Bosch subsidiary's long-established presence in York.

The £1.6 million investment and expansion will bring a wide range of new highly skilled jobs to the area, and more than 60 positions will potentially be created over the coming months. This expansion is clearly a strong sign of confidence in York and we very much welcome this substantial investment from Bosch in the city.

Looking forward, this is an important and growing industry – and York will continue to be at the heart of developments that can shape the future of transport across the globe. By securing this investment, there is potential to make York a centre for the development of software for connected and autonomous vehicles in the future and along with this,

provide a boost to our local job market and create more opportunities for our residents.

The HMS York Funnel Badge:

Colleagues will be pleased to know that the Royal Navy has kindly gifted the City of York both funnel badges from HMS York. The funnel badges are an oversized version of HMS York's ships badge, survived when HMS York (D98), a Type 42 Destroyer, was decommissioned in 2012 and then later scrapped in 2015, following 30 years of service in the Royal Navy.

This pieces of naval history will be formally gifted to the city by Royal Navy Commodore and Naval Regional Commander for Northern England and Isle of Man, Phil Waterhouse ADC, at West Offices this month, where colleagues will be able to see the funnel badge mounted in the King Richard III Room.