

An update on progress towards a new single council for North Yorkshire

Issue 3 – May 30, 2022

Earlier this month (May 5) the **local elections** in North Yorkshire saw 90 councillors elected to represent 89 new divisions. These councillors will serve the remaining 10 months of the current county council and then the first four years of the new single North Yorkshire Council. The Conservative Party retained a majority and at the subsequent Annual General Meeting a new Executive was put in place. The leader of the council is Cllr Carl Les, the deputy leader, who also has responsibility for finance, is Cllr Gareth Dadd. The executive member for business and economic development is Cllr Derek Bastiman and for corporate services it is Cllr David Chance. The portfolio for highways and transportation is with Cllr Keane Duncan, for health and adult services it's Cllr Michael Harrison and for growth and culture, leisure, sport and housing it is Cllr Simon Myers. Children and young people's services will be looked after by Cllr Janet Sanderson. For stronger communities, digital connectivity and climate change it is Cllr Greg White and Cllr Annabel Wilkinson takes on education, learning and skills. Many of you have developed strong working relationships with executive members and with local members and will want to do so in the future. Here are some links that you will find helpful:

Executive appointed: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/news/article/executive-unveiled-landmark-move-north-yorkshire-council>

County council elections results: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/news/article/conservatives-retain-power-landmark-election-north-yorkshire>

Full list of local councillors and their committees and divisions map: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/councillors-information>

Agreement on major projects and spending: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/news/article/financial-safeguards-put-place-move-new-unitary-council>

District and borough councillors will continue to serve their communities until all eight councils involved in Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in North Yorkshire cease to exist on 31 March next year.

You may recall that the LGR programme here is supported by 15 workstreams, focussed on delivering the best possible transition to North Yorkshire Council on 1 April next year. Each includes representatives or leadership from all eight councils and good collaboration and progress is continuing. The devolution process is running in parallel to these workstreams. As a result, we remain on track to deliver all the key activity and decisions necessary to launch North Yorkshire Council safely. Updates from each workstream are below.

Locality (Sponsor, Paul Shevlin/Craven DC) – One important aspect of the Locality workstream centres on our ambition to be the most local, geographically large, council in England. Working locally, delivering services that are relevant to communities, supporting groups, organisations, businesses and partners to work together, are at the heart of our work. Co-designing services and taking local action in partnership are key values we are keen to embed in our new council's thinking and actions from the start. This will be a long-term transformation which we know you feel passionately about. Options appraisals are being developed and we will keep you up to date as these progress.

Corporate Governance (Sponsor, Barry Khan/NYCC) – Much of the workstream’s focus has been on the county council elections, which took place earlier this month. Following those elections, the newly appointed Executive has held its first meeting, at which members agreed to work closely with colleagues at the county’s seven district authorities to monitor major financial decisions and ensure leading schemes become a reality. The decision to keep a check on major spending across North Yorkshire is vital to co-ordinate the shift to a single council and ensure adequate funds are available from next spring. The executive also approved an implementation plan to secure a smooth transition to North Yorkshire Council. Meanwhile, the workstream continues its work to ensure the new council has all the necessary policies and procedures in place to ensure it is safe and legal on day one.

Culture, Leisure and Sport (Sponsor, Richard Webb/NYCC) – This workstream’s aim is to have a local focus, combined with a global ambition. The county has played host to major sporting events, is home to Olympic athletes and to world-renowned theatres, festivals and creative people. We want to build on the strengths of the existing eight councils and we have three key programmes of work. The first is leisure facilities and service delivery making sure that leisure centres, gyms and pools, and contracted arrangements, work well on day one and that we can work with councillors to develop the future operating and financial model for these services between now and 2027. The second is developing community sport and physical activity and bringing together sports development as well as public health services, so that it makes the most of our current investment and services. This is especially important in areas that may not have access to leisure centres and to help more people move more - and more often. The third is around arts, culture, heritage and libraries, ensuring we make the most of our collections, events, programmes and venues by ensuring that creativity has a pivotal role to play within the new council and, crucially, as part of market towns’ development. Within these three programmes of work there are also three themes that underpin them. Firstly, there is a focus on making sure the work programmes are clean, green and safe. This is particularly important for health and safety for day one and beyond, and our action to reduce the carbon footprint of our services. Secondly, communities, diversity and engagement is a key focus, this means working with our communities and our staff to prepare for day one and afterwards. Finally, economy, place, regeneration and the visitor economy. We are making sure that what we do is connected to wider change programme work on the economy, devolution, events and tourism.

Customer (Sponsor, Wallace Sampson/Harrogate BC) – Considerable work has taken place to develop the day one “One Front Door” approach for the new council’s three primary channels – online, telephone and face-to-face. Customer access points for day one have been identified in partnership with the Locality workstream to ensure that the new council keeps things local for all. We have explored several options to achieve the preferred delivery of the single website, as well as continuing work to develop a new telephony model with the aim of a single new telephone number for customers. Finally, we have been working with the Finance workstream to ensure our new council budget can be set. This is linked to key decisions, which need to be made around council tax discounts and premiums, discretionary relief and reduction schemes. This is one of the first critical areas relating directly to the new council we are working towards.

Devolution (Sponsors, Richard Flinton/NYCC, Ian Floyd/City of York, Mike Greene/Scarborough BC) – A devolution deal for York and North Yorkshire is an historic moment signalling a new beginning to bring home greater investment and more localised powers. A deal is currently being negotiated with the Government and we are expecting an announcement on an offer this summer, before we stage public consultations later in the year. As you will be aware, the move to the unitary authority in April

2023 is necessary to secure a deal that will shift decision-making and spending powers away from Westminster to the region. City of York Council will continue as a unitary authority and run in tandem with the new North Yorkshire Council. Government has stated that the mayoral-led combined authority model is the best option of offer and, should we agree the terms, the next steps will be the legal creation of the mayoral combined authority around November 2023. Elections for a mayor would follow in May 2024 for the whole of York and North Yorkshire. You can watch and read more about the case made to Government in April 2022 here: [York & North Yorkshire Devolution | Initiatives | York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership \(ynylep.com\)](https://ynylep.com)

Economic Development (Sponsor, Mike Greene/Scarborough BC) – We are focussed on ensuring that there are no gaps in service and that major capital projects across the region continue to be delivered at pace. We are also looking to lever-in further funding, whether from government or the private sector, to support the economy and help drive our unique towns, villages and communities forward. One of the hugely important contributors to North Yorkshire’s economy is tourism and structures to support the visitor economy are being looked at. Key stakeholders will be involved in this piece of work. Earlier this month the Yorkshire Leaders board released a statement on continuing work around destination marketing at a regional level. They said: “Local authority officers are currently liaising with key business and sector forums in the four sub-regions across Yorkshire, to test the feedback from previous engagement undertaken with both private and public organisations and understand ambitions for a sustainable region wide destination marketing organisation. This includes positive initial dialogue with the new owners of Welcome to Yorkshire’s previous assets, Silicon Dales, to understand their aspirations and intentions. It is important that this is done right, and so these vital conversations across a range of stakeholders and service providers will take place throughout the early summer to help shape the remit and form of a new regional organisation.”

Finance (Sponsor, Gary Fielding/NYCC) – The process of setting a budget for the first financial year of the new council has begun, with an initial review of existing budget pressures and issues completed. Further work will continue on this over the coming weeks, including setting a timetable and process for how a new budget will be set for the new council. In June, the new Executive will review council tax proposals for harmonising key policies on reductions and discounts. Work on proposals for a consistent approach to non-domestic rates is also in progress. If approved, the process of engaging with residents and other stakeholders on these policies will begin, before a final decision is made. A single approach to these areas will be in place for day one of the new council. Work also continues alongside I.C.T. colleagues to ensure financial systems will be in place and a procurement protocol has been approved so councils can continue to procure the work and contracts they need, ahead of the new council launching. Where there are companies that are owned by the existing councils, for example Yorwaste, transition requirements are being explored to ensure that the necessary work is being done to transfer them to the new council.

Housing (Sponsor, Justin Ives/Hambleton DC) – Housing services are important to tenants, leaseholders, residents, and partners across North Yorkshire. We are continuing to work hard to ensure strategies and procedures are ready for the new authority. Following our initial review of the different housing services across the eight councils we have started to produce draft policies for Housing Allocations and the Disability Facilities Grant and Regulatory Reform Order Grants. Following approval of these policies, we will be holding consultations with the relevant partners and audiences. We have approved a high-level structure and set out key milestones, which will allow us to develop a housing strategy for the new council. The new strategy will cover North Yorkshire only but

will acknowledge joint issues of interest with the City of York and East Riding. A priority for us is to ensure tenants and leaseholders are kept informed and have all the information they need before the beginning of the new council. In June, we will be providing an update to tenants and leaseholders in Harrogate, Selby, and Richmondshire through their tenant magazine. This line of communication will continue until the new council launches on 1 April, 2023.

Human Resources (HR) (Sponsor, Justine Brooksbank/NYCC) – It's been an extremely busy time for the HR workstream, supporting the immediate priorities around staff retention during a time of change and planning for the transfer of colleagues into the new council. The transfer process covers key issues around pay, terms and conditions, pensions, working arrangements and locations, planning for training and staff support. All of these will underpin the successful creation of the new council – ensuring we can deliver core services on day one and setting the groundwork for future transformation. A key priority continues to be supporting staff retention. The recruitment market is a significant challenge, so it's really important that we keep all colleagues to help us deliver the best possible services. A lot of proactive work has taken place over recent weeks to engage with staff directly on the issues that matter most to them to help reassure them on the process. Staff support sessions have run in every council, alongside the project-wide engagement work, to ensure colleagues feel part of this change process. The workstream has also rolled-out staff support networks and additional help to all colleagues involved, from all councils.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) & Digital (Sponsor Stuart Carlton/NYCC) – Further planning and workshops have taken place to ensure services continue uninterrupted on day one. We are carrying out reviews of our systems, technology and data to make them as effective and efficient as possible. A key development since our last update has been the changes made to our eight Teams platforms. Colleagues from all councils can now search for and check the availability of their colleagues in any of the eight councils; this simple feature makes it much easier and more efficient to send an instant message or start a voice or video call. This has been a positive step to enable the closer collaboration required to deliver the new council.

Organisational Development (Sponsor, Stacey Burlet/Ryedale DC) - A significant amount of work has taken place over recent weeks to develop the new council's values and behaviours. To date, information has been gathered through staff engagement, with the results being fed into the development of the long-term organisational development plan for the new council and informing the development of its policies and approach to a wide range of issues including leadership and working arrangements. Having such a plan is an important part of us setting and delivering high standards around performance – which ultimately supports the best quality services for our communities - and determines how we interact with partners like yourselves and the people we serve. Other core activity progressed by this workstream over recent weeks includes work to ensure we embed equality into the new organisation, ensuring that our services represent and respond to the needs of everyone in our communities. The workstream is also developing a set of leadership principles, to help us manage performance effectively and create the right environment for staff to drive innovation and productivity, supporting the organisation to deliver long-term transformation and efficiencies.

Planning (Sponsor, Janet Waggot/Selby DC) – Work to develop our new planning service is progressing. We have been in contact with the planning agents the current councils work with to set up quarterly 'agent's forums'. The forums will allow us to keep agents up to date with our progress, as well as receive and act on any feedback we get. Forums for people using the planning service are also

being established and will be hosted during the summer. Customer journey maps have been produced for the different processes provided by the existing planning services and these are currently being reviewed to improve consistency. Key document templates are also being compared so they can be standardised. Work is underway to prepare a single planning customer charter/code of practice, a local enforcement plan and a validation checklist for planning applications for day one. We are also working with the Human Resources workstream to look at setting up our own graduate programme, which will be unique to the new planning service. Nationally there are issues with recruitment and retention in the planning sector, particularly for councils. The aim is for our proposed home-grown approach to help mitigate any risk to our new service. We are also working on support plans for the new councillors who are the decision-makers on policies and planning applications. Drawing on planning policy expertise from across North Yorkshire, we are exploring options for future plan making that supports sustainable economic growth and place-making. Once an approach has been agreed by councillors, we will prepare a 'Local Development Scheme' and a 'Statement of Community Involvement' to explain key milestones and how the community will be involved. We are also looking at how we can ensure a smooth transition of processes to support neighbourhood planning, planning obligations and monitoring requirements. In addition, we have met with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) (an organisation funded by central government to support local planning authorities) to see how they could support us in creating our new service.

Property (Sponsor, Justin Ives/Hambleton DC) – Work is underway to look at the information that we need to collate about the properties that the new council will own. We are also currently in the process of looking at the various options that we can implement for staff in terms of their workplace for day one e.g. access control, desk booking and meeting room booking systems at key buildings. We are also starting to look at the out-of-hours processes to ensure that there is no break in service for our customers reporting their emergency repair requirements. This work is alongside looking at the contracts and arrangements that all of the councils currently have in place to make sure that they are delivering all of the various compliance checks in their properties to ensure that arrangements will be in place for the new council for day one. We are also looking at the projects that are underway to understand what projects the council will have live when it launches, taking the opportunity to learn from each other about what has worked well and how we can share knowledge, skills and experience in our projects.

Regulatory Services and Emergency Planning (Sponsor, Tony Clark/Richmondshire DC) – We remain focussed on ensuring regulatory and statutory services are still delivered post-day one. A key part of this will be the continued close working with our partners, such as the emergency services, to ensure a smooth transition. Currently, we are mapping all existing stakeholders so that they are involved, and engaged with, when the opportunities arise. For example, the delivery of the flood plan, major incident plan and recovery plan. Another action has been to establish sub groups for our realigned work areas, these include regulatory services, partnerships, business resilience and bereavement. Work is now underway to develop project plans for each area of these work areas, identifying key milestones and attaching dates and timelines to project plans. It is an exciting time and there are many positive opportunities but it is imperative we continue to work collectively to ensure this smooth transition to the new authority.

Waste, Highways Parking and Street Scene (Sponsor, Karl Battersby/NYCC) - Waste collections, street lighting, cleanliness and road maintenance services are vital services for our residents and our focus is in making sure there is no disruption throughout the change programme. We have mapped

out the differences in how these services are currently delivered across each area of North Yorkshire. We have also been working hard to ensure that the front line staff for these services, who are among our most visible and high profile representatives, are kept really well informed about this work through a series of face-to-face roadshows.

Communications, Engagement and Branding (Sponsor, Richard Flinton/NYCC) – As well as ensuring that communications are relevant and timely for staff, elected members, residents, businesses and partners, we are managing some large and complex tasks to support other workstreams. For Customer and ICT we are leading on what content should be on a new council’s website and how that should be structured so it makes sense to all stakeholders. Detailed work is underway to bring corporate social media channels together so that a ‘one front door’ approach is effective across these platforms for April 1 next year. Design options for the new organisation’s look and feel are underway and an options appraisal for rolling out that brand will be taken to the Executive later this year. This is an extremely collaborative approach with comms teams from all eight councils taking lead roles across different areas. We are also preparing detailed plans to support the new Executive with the consultations and engagement that will be necessary linked to the decisions members will need to make ahead of forming a budget, a council plan and other important policies.

We will be in touch again to keep you informed of progress and to highlight opportunities for you to get involved in helping to shape the new council.

Kind regards,



Richard Flinton
Chief Executive
North Yorkshire County Council



Mike Greene
Chief Executive
Scarborough Borough Council



Wallace Sampson
Chief Executive
Harrogate Borough Council



Justin Ives
Chief Executive
Hambleton District Council



Tony Clark
Chief Executive
Richmondshire District Council



Janet Waggott
Chief Executive
Selby District Council



Paul Shevlin
Chief Executive
Craven District Council



Stacey Burlet
Chief Executive
Ryedale District Council