

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

Issue 2 – February 2022

Introduction – In April 2023, less than 14 months' time, the new **North Yorkshire Council** will take over providing public services for every resident, household and community in the county. This new organisation will replace the county council and seven district/borough councils, which currently operate. Leaflets outlining a little about what this will mean for everyone who lives here are going out in council tax bills across the county soon and in a few weeks' time important **county council elections** will take place. All eight councils are working hard together to deliver the best possible new council. We hope you find the below updates from the workstreams driving the local government change programme in North Yorkshire helpful.

Locality – The new council will **keep things local** with staff continuing to live and work in the communities they serve. There will still be a main office in each district with additional customer access points across the county. New place-based partnerships will support communities, bringing together residents, councillors, town and parish councils, MPs, local businesses, groups and partners e.g. NHS, North Yorkshire Police and the fire and rescue service.

There are likely to be six area committees based on parliamentary constituencies, which will be made up of all the unitary councillors from that area (approx. 15). These will make local decisions on matters like licensing; hold the new council's executive to account and support community ambitions and priorities.

Corporate Governance – Our current focus is the draft Structural Changes Order (SCO), which is expected to be ratified by Parliament in the coming weeks and which paves the way for county council elections in May this year. The order is really important as it confirms the legal process necessary to support the formation of a new single council. In the elections on **5 May**, 90 councillors will be elected to 89 divisions. They will **serve for five years** (not the usual four), and they will play a key role in shaping the new council and the services it provides. These councillors will be making decisions that affect you, your family, your community and your business. Work is under way to ensure any potential candidates fully understand the new role, including a series of online events beginning this month. You can find out more about those here <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/news/article/find-out-about-becoming-candidate-crucial-elections> For details of the new divisions click this link <https://maps.northyorks.gov.uk/connect>

Work is also progressing so that the new council has all the necessary policies and procedure in place to ensure it is **safe and legal on day one – 1 April 2023**.

Culture, leisure and sport – Our priority is to ensure that on day one people can go for their swim or to the gym, book a show, visit a museum or take out a library book as usual.

Our wider aim is to lay the foundations to realise North Yorkshire's potential as one of the best places for culture, leisure and sport. We want to explore opportunities to maximise external funding into the county (some of which will be available in 2022) and we aim to achieve this alongside strong collaborative partnerships. To do this for culture, we are mapping provision across the whole area, working together to join up thinking on attracting funding and National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) submissions and will be creating a single culture team. This team will take forward the North Yorkshire Cultural Framework and Libraries Strategy, as well as local plans and strategies. NPOs receive government funding administered by Arts Council England. They are expected to be leaders in their areas of arts, heritage

and culture, and have a collective responsibility to protect and develop the national arts and cultural ecology by delivering on Arts Council strategic outcomes through their work. Currently North Yorkshire only has seven NPOs.

For leisure and sport, we are making sure customers will continue to experience a good, local offer from the start and that communities and partners are kept well informed. Looking ahead, we are thinking about how we might operate in the future to best support wider wellbeing and health outcomes, increase participation and activity levels and make sure the offer is really inclusive for everyone.

Customer – We are working hard to ensure the new unitary council looks and feels like one organisation for our customers from day one. To deliver this and provide an excellent customer service, a ‘one front door’ approach has been agreed. This will offer a consistent and accessible customer focused approach with a mix of online and face-to-face customer services across the county. We are now using existing customer feedback and insight from across district, borough and county council teams to inform our operating model while working with other workstreams to ensure a customer-focused vision is delivered across the new council.

Devolution – The UK Government has launched its white paper for Levelling Up, which included an invitation to York and North Yorkshire to enter negotiations with a view to forming a devolution deal for our region, based on a Mayoral Combined Authority, similar to the one in the Tees Valley. The announcement was warmly welcomed in a joint statement from Cllr Carl Les, Chair of the Implementation Board for the new North Yorkshire Council (and leader North Yorkshire County Council) and Cllr Keith Aspden, leader of City of York Council, which read:

“Today’s announcement of a levelling up white paper brings York and North Yorkshire a step closer to a devolution deal. Devolution can unlock significant, long-term, investment for this region, driving growth and contributing to a stronger Northern economy. It has the potential to bring improvements to areas such as public transport, infrastructure, support for businesses, education and skills, benefitting the people who live and work here. A devolution deal could also help deliver an ambition for this region to become England’s first carbon negative economy. We therefore welcome the commitment shown for levelling up and devolution in this announcement.”

“We now look forward to entering into negotiations with Government to secure the best possible deal for our region. We hope to see York and North Yorkshire taken forward as the first city-region rural powerhouse to make devolution a reality.”

You can read the white paper [here](#) (the reference to devolution for York and North Yorkshire is on p235).

The headline ‘asks’ for the deal that will be under negotiation were drawn up in collaboration with all local authorities in the region and the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership in 2020. You can see a summary here <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/new-council-and-devolution-north-yorkshire>

Winning a devolution deal will be a huge opportunity for the region’s economy, bringing new and better jobs and opportunities. Devolution was one of the drivers behind the move to create a single new council. It is important to stress that while one of these things led to the other, devolution and the process of becoming a unitary council are in themselves separate. Negotiating a deal with Government will lead to a Combined Authority through which the devolution deal will be administered and governed. Looking after the Combined Authority will be a new Mayor, who will operate across North Yorkshire and York.

The parameters of the deal, the timelines for negotiation and what comes after, are still to be finalised. These are decisions that will be addressed by all elected councillors in York and North Yorkshire. There will also be a broad public consultation. Subject to all the proper processes of consultation and agreement, it is possible that we could see Mayoral elections in May 2024.

Economic Development – Creating economic growth for North Yorkshire is one of the biggest opportunities afforded by the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the creation of the new North Yorkshire Council. It comes at a crucial time to aid our recovery from the pandemic. We have ambitious plans for supporting business growth, generating inward investment, firing up the jobs and skills agenda and prioritising regeneration. Underpinning those ambitions, North Yorkshire needs a sustainable, world-class visitor economy, bringing income into the county.

The new North Yorkshire Council will put us firmly in the driving seat to unlock the opportunities provided by the government's Levelling Up agenda, by giving us a stronger collective voice when speaking to investors and government. We will be engaging all of our stakeholders over the next year as we approach 1 April 2023, to maximise these opportunities.

Finance – Work has started on pulling together financial information and identifying key systems as well as reviewing contractual arrangements to ensure essential services continue uninterrupted, while avoiding duplication and making savings. Options for harmonising existing key policies such as council tax reduction are also being worked up, so we can consult with residents in time to provide a single approach for day one of the new council. And, just as the eight councils finish setting their own final budgets this month, the work picks up on pulling together that information to start an early shadow budget for the new council for 2023/24.

Housing – Housing services are very important to tenants, leaseholders, residents and partners across North Yorkshire. We are working hard to ensure that strategies and procedures are ready for the new authority. We are reviewing the current housing services across all seven districts/boroughs so we can identify any gaps in services and retain best practice for the new organisation. As part of this we are looking at the opportunities to deliver quick wins in areas such as Disabled Facilities Grants. We aim to have an efficient, timely and people-focused delivery for this grant to support people to live independently through things like home adaptations. Through one single Disabled Facilities Grants policy, we will align different schemes to work together more effectively.

Human Resources (HR) – our staff are our greatest asset and a significant effort is going into keeping everyone informed and engaged in the change programme. This workstream is core to support a seamless transition to the new council, by ensuring all staff can join together in the new organisation and that our services continue on day one. This includes, for example, supporting the legal process of transferring colleagues into the new council. Over recent weeks, we have been finalising proposals around TUPE transfer for some staff; for others, they will transfer as part of the continuing authority arrangement set out in the Structural Changes Order.

Other key parts of this workstream's focus at the moment include looking at the policies and arrangements for staff that will support the new council to retain and recruit the best skills to support longer-term innovation and transformation of services. We have also delivered a new joint approach to recruitment during the period of change to best support all the councils involved. This helps all eight councils to pool resources where needed ahead of the change in April 2023. Together, these things will ensure that staff are able to deliver for residents and businesses from day one of North Yorkshire Council.

As you would expect, **HR** is working very closely with **Organisational Development (OD)** - Organisational Development is the glue that will bind together the new council. The overall approach will shape and embed the vision of the new council and set the course for its values and behaviours, which will define how we act and how we work with each other to deliver a successful and high-

performing council. It will also set the blueprint for how we influence and work with key partners, our residents, communities and businesses.

The workstream is now focusing on a number of core areas, including the best ways to support health and wellbeing so we can better serve our residents, communities and businesses, work safely, and retain the skills and resources needed. We are also looking at how we embed equality, fairness and diversity into what we do and how we do it, to ensure we are truly representative of the communities we serve and proactively tackle disadvantage.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) & Digital – One of the most important tasks for this area is to make sure that all staff can access what they need to on day one so that services continue uninterrupted. It is a vast piece of work to map out and bring together systems and processes managing things like data storage and online services for customers. Everything from door and email access to payment and financial collection systems will need to be operating safely on day one.

Planning – This workstream is responsible for the development of a new, high-quality planning service for North Yorkshire and its communities. Planning expertise from all eight councils has been combined to ensure statutory services will be provided effectively and in line with legislation from day one of the new council. They are also leading on the creation of an ambitious vision and framework for future development in the county, with a local focus, to support sustainable economic growth, prosperous communities, and protect the much-loved heritage assets for which the county is famous.

Property – This area is working on how to get the very best from all our property assets. For example, staff will be able to access office space locally, cutting travelling times, reducing vehicle emissions and engaging with new colleagues in the locality. Practical things like making sure that all of our tenants know who to contact, understand any changes to how they pay rent and also the new number to call if any emergencies arise in terms of the maintenance. Continuing to provide a good service to our customers in a safe and legal way is the key priority.

Regulatory services and emergency planning – Our focus is to make sure key regulatory services and statutory duties continue to be delivered, committees and staff have the tools and authority needed to conduct their duties and relationships with our key partnership are maintained. Looking to the future, we also want to build upon the positive work we have already started across the county. For example, how we can improve on community resilience work, develop the multiagency nature of community safety hubs and build upon the existing North Yorkshire Building Control Partnership (NYBCP).

Waste, highways parking and street scene – As waste collections, street lighting, cleanliness and road maintenance services are highly visible to our residents, we are working hard to ensure that these are kept running at the same high levels of service throughout the LGR change programme. We are confirming the scope of services and understanding any differences around how they are currently delivered across the districts. Many staff in these areas work on the front line with communities and we are focussed on keeping them really well informed. As part of this, plans have been made to deliver a series of face-to-face roadshows starting in the coming weeks.

Service area updates:

Adult services – Health and Adult Services continues with measures to protect the health of the whole population and to help manage Covid outbreaks in care homes and schools with guidance and support. As we move beyond the current Covid restrictions, we will work with NHS, borough/district, voluntary sector and independent sector partners to continue to develop health protection; to address the public health priorities for the county; to focus on prevention and good mental and physical health; to continue our market development programme with the care sector; to grow our existing extra care

and supported housing services; to develop a comprehensive model of health and social care services in the community; and to prepare for major national reforms to adult social care and public health.

Children and Young People – North Yorkshire County Council’s Children and Young People’s Service are currently looking at some of the housing issues facing young people leaving care in North Yorkshire, and the potential for working in collaboration with district council housing partners on the issue.

Over the coming months, the county council is also keen to explore the potential incentives that can be used to recruit much-needed foster carers and provide foster families with support in providing children with healthy, active lives.

Workstreams and their sponsors

Workstream	Sponsor	Organisation
Corporate Governance	Barry Khan	North Yorkshire
Comms, Engagement & Branding	Richard Flinton	North Yorkshire
Culture, Leisure & Sport	Richard Webb	North Yorkshire
Customer(incl. Revs/Bens)	Wallace Sampson	Harrogate
Economic Development	Mike Greene	Scarborough
Finance	Gary Fielding	North Yorkshire
Housing	Justin Ives	Hambleton
Human Resources	Justine Brooksbank	North Yorkshire
ICT & Digital	Stuart Carlton	North Yorkshire
Locality	Paul Shevlin	Craven
Organisational Development	Stacey Burlet	Ryedale
Planning	Janet Waggott	Selby
Property	Justin Ives	Hambleton
Regulatory Services & Emergency Planning	Tony Clark	Richmondshire
Waste, Highways, Parking & Street Scene	Karl Battersby	North Yorkshire

Service areas	Day 1 planning and service continuity only
Adults	
Children’s	
Public Health	

Devolution		To be pursued in parallel to the transition to unitary council
Mike Greene	Scarborough	
Richard Flinton	North Yorkshire	
Ian Floyd	York	

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 Buriel
Chief Executive
Ryedale District Council