



## **Councillor Mark Crane**

### **Leader of the Council - 22 September 2020**

This report covers the period from the Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020. During this period I have attended virtual Executive and represented the Council at local, regional and national virtual meetings. I have held two virtual staff sessions with the Chief Executive, virtual Parish Meetings. I have also attended meetings of the COVID outbreak planning board.

I start my statement by thanking Officers and Councillors who have worked collectively, with a single determination to keep our communities safe during this very difficult period. I would particularly like to express my thanks the Leaders of the opposition Groups Councillors Bob Packham and Mary McCartney, the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Cllr Steve Shaw Wright and the Chairman of Policy Review Cllr Andrew Lee all of whom have worked together whilst we have operated, as a Council, using urgency powers. This cooperation and understanding has enabled swift action to be taken to deliver the services and support that residents and businesses needed. I would also like to thank the Chairmen of committees who have made sure business continues.

During this period we have all had to adjust to many changes including new ways of working and most of us have had to learn new skills. As Councillors we have all got more used virtual meetings and have used "Teams live", as we are today.

This has happened as a result of the tremendous efforts of our staff who have worked extremely hard over a long period of time to ensure this is possible. Our staff, like us, have also had to cope with many demands and changes including learning new ways of working. I recognise that they have gone above and beyond in their approach to work. I know the Executive members have thanked the staff teams within their portfolio area. I would also like to add my thanks.

Finally, and by no means least, I would like to recognise the work of our Town and Parish Councils, Parish meetings and the unstinting efforts of our voluntary and community sectors and all our partners who work tirelessly to provide the services and support to those who are often are in most need.

I would like to place on record my appreciation for all your efforts, it makes very proud to be the Leader of Selby District Council.

However the virus has not gone away. As with other District Council Leaders across North Yorkshire I am a member of the COVID Outbreak planning board. As you are aware there has been an increase in the number of people who have tested positively in the Selby district and I know it was a great disappointment to many that the fundraising event planned for Hemingbrough on the 12 September had to be cancelled .

I thought it would be helpful to outline the role Selby District Council has in supporting NHS Track and Trace and the Local outbreak plans and powers. NYCC Public Health are leading local outbreak planning, within a national framework, and with the support of NHS Test and Trace, Public Health England and other government departments. Selby District Council along with the other districts with responsibility for Environmental Health are working closely with NYCC to manage any local outbreak which meet the agreed criteria. COVID-19 local outbreak plans are based on the tried and tested practice of preventing and containing outbreaks. The Environmental Health service play an important role by assisting the investigation of complex COVID-19 cases and completion of follow-up investigations of contact tracing and outbreak consequence management. There is no direct funding to support the districts additional work which is already currently estimated to be operating at 150% of capacity.

### **An update on the Civic Centre**

The final arrangements to make the workplace COVID-secure are being put in place and staff have begun to return to the Civic centre. Part of the work has been the removal of a large number of desks to allow for social distancing – reducing capacity by half. The use of many meeting rooms is also significantly affected by the need to maintain distance between occupants.

As a result, only those staff who cannot deliver their role effectively from home will return to the Civic Centre in the short term. Staff have started to return to the Civic Centre in a phased way, this has been supported by risk assessments. The majority of staff will continue to work at home and we will ensure they are also supported to perform their roles. As colleagues are aware, the rollout of Microsoft Teams has meant we can all now work more effectively from home.

Other changes to the Civic Centre include the introduction of a one-way system for moving around the building, introduction of multiple sanitising stations and single occupancy toilets and lifts. There will also be new entry and exit doors for staff and a protective screen for the reception area. There are waiting times for the latter items and it will only be when all of this is in place that the building can fully re-open.

The Contact Centre will not return to Market Cross. Customer Services will now be based at the Civic Centre – although many will continue to work at home. Face to face services are not planned to resume until the building is COVID-secure and then it will be by appointment only. Detailed plans for this are being finalised and will be communicated shortly.

### **Performance update**

Earlier this month, Executive reviewed Council performance for the first quarter. This was the main period when the COVID lockdown was in place. Whilst there were some aspects of service delivery that suffered during lockdown, such as leisure services (the centres were closed due to COVID regulations) and housing repairs which were limited to emergencies only, colleagues were impressed with the way good performance was maintained across a number of services. This was at a time when there was an increased demand for some services such as council tax support and hardship payments to residents whilst additional services were also delivered, including payment of government grants and support to businesses and calls to support vulnerable residents. We successfully implemented a new waste collection service and saw an increase in collection volumes. Customer services were maintained via online and telephony channels to support residents through this period.

Executive thanked staff for their work during the lockdown period and specifically acknowledged the work of the Council to support small businesses in the District during COVID-19, as well as the work of Officers to progress the Council's new Local Plan.

## **Leisure**

We have been working with IHL since the lockdown began to discuss their recovery plan. The Council was successful in obtaining a grant of £4,000 from Sport England to enable us to engage Strategic Leisure to support us in providing specialist advice on how COVID-19 impacts on the provision of leisure services and to support the provision of a realistic delivery plan. Following these discussions IHL re-opened the Selby Leisure Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and provided the leisure services which were compliant with the government's latest advice. Tadcaster Leisure Centre opened on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

The Summit provides a greater challenge in terms of the nature of the services provided and the Council, supported by Strategic Leisure, remain in discussion with IHL about proposals for this facility.

## **Devolution in York and North Yorkshire**

Since my last report I have spent quite a lot of time in meetings discussing devolution for York and North Yorkshire and more recently Local Government Review. The Leaders of York and North Yorkshire County and Districts meet with the then Minister Simon Clark on 7 July 2020. The Minister made it quite clear that any devolution deal would be dependent on Local Government Review (LGR) and the formation of unitary Councils. We were told that this would be part of the Devolution and Growth white paper thought to be September.

The Minister informed the Leaders that the optimum size of a unitary authority would be 400,000 and York at 210,000 was therefore sub optimal. Since that time there seems to have been different interpretations of what the Minister said and we have written to the Minister to seek clarification on this point. I also met the Minister separately.

As you may be aware the county of North Yorkshire intend to submit a proposal for a Unitary Council covering the whole of North Yorkshire with a population 610,000 and I understand York intend to remain as a Unitary Council of 210,000 residents. We were told that we would receive a letter inviting us to put forward a proposal and the letter would be received "shortly", as I write to you today no letter has arrived. We were informed that it only requires one Organisation to submit a proposal and the Government will consider that and consult upon it.

As we know that NYCC and the City of York will submit proposals I have worked with the North Yorkshire District Leaders and Chief Executives to consider what is the best option for Selby residents and businesses. We engaged KPMG to support us with this work and are preparing an outline business case for change. Because this is of such importance I have said that I will give you as much opportunity as possible to have your say on what you think is best for Selby. I am grateful to those members who were able to attend the discussion session on 3 September

**The website lets get change right gives further detail on the proposals.** [www.get-change-right.com](http://www.get-change-right.com)

On the matter of Devolution – the devolved powers from Whitehall to York and North Yorkshire. A report was considered by Executive on 6.8.2020 which outlined the proposals for a devolution deal for North and North Yorkshire. Executive agreed to start the negotiations with Government to progress a devolution deal. The Borough and Districts councils of North Yorkshire with the City of

York and North Yorkshire County Council have considered this matter and the majority have agreed to start the process to negotiate a Devolution deal for York and North Yorkshire.

Because Simon Clark MP has now been replaced by Luke Hall as the Minister for MHCLG and that fact that there has still been no letter to invite Local Authorities to put forward proposals for LGR, we need to be clear about the views and priorities of the Minister and find out when the White paper will be published. It is therefore sensible for us to wait before we start negotiations on Devolution and Executive will consider this further.

The Devo Asks are summarised here, the whole document is available. In summary the devolution deal would devolve powers from Central Government and decisions would be made more locally, in addition there would be a "gain share" of £25M per annum to deliver for the local area.

[https://democracy.selby.gov.uk/documents/s10039/Appendix%203%20-%20YNY%20devolution%20proposal%20to%20Govt\\_Summary.pdf](https://democracy.selby.gov.uk/documents/s10039/Appendix%203%20-%20YNY%20devolution%20proposal%20to%20Govt_Summary.pdf)

<https://democracy.selby.gov.uk/documents/s10040/Appendix%204%20-%20YNY%20devo%20proposal%20to%20Govt.pdf>

**Mark Crane**  
**Leader of the Council**