



Councillor Mark Crane

Leader of the Council – 22 July 2021

This report covers the period from the Council meeting on 13 April 2021. During this period, I have attended Executive meetings and represented the Council at local, regional and national virtual meetings. I have also attended meetings of the COVID outbreak planning board and a number of District Council Network (DCN) and Local Government Association (LGA) meetings and events. I have worked with the DCN on representation on the planning reforms and the LGA on the proposed waste strategy and implications.

Council Performance

Executive considered the 2020/21 Quarter 4/Year end Corporate Performance Report on 8 July. We were pleased to note that, on the whole, performance has been sustained across this very difficult and challenging year with some exceptions. We noted positive work around support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the safe reopening of the high streets, Council Tax collection rates and staff sickness absence, which fell for the seventh consecutive quarter. The suspension of non-urgent housing repairs throughout the third national lockdown resulted in a backlog of work. However, I have continued to monitor performance over recent weeks and significant progress has been made since then to reduce the outstanding jobs. Officers are currently working on the Annual Report for 2020/21 and this will go to Executive in August.

Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme

Local staff who worked for the UK Government in Afghanistan, including many who worked as interpreters for the UK forces, are now eligible for expedited relocation in the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy. Following the decision to begin the withdrawal of military forces from Afghanistan, the Government have agreed to rapidly accelerate the programme and recognition of the increased risk to the locally employed staff they hope to relocate the staff impacted by September 2021.

On 3rd June 2021 a request was sent to all Local Authority Chief Executives and Leaders inviting them to join this programme and discussions took place with colleagues at North Yorkshire County Council and the North Yorkshire districts and borough Council's. The scheme will work in much the same way as the Syrian Refugee Scheme that we previously participated in, and the scheme will be wholly grant funded by the UK government. Due to the urgency of the request, I have agreed for Selby to support the wider North Yorkshire relocation scheme and for us to help relocate two families in the Selby district in the Summer of 2021.

As the threat to those who worked for us in Afghanistan rises, I am pleased to be in a position to support this scheme and to help accelerate the relocation of those who may be at risk of reprisal.

Housing

Most of our housing tenant services are now back up and running as normal. This includes investigating reports of anti-social behaviour, carrying out sign ups, tenancy visits and property inspections. We continue to contact tenants before visiting to carry out a Covid-19 questionnaire prior to the visit and we have risk assessments in place to ensure that our customers and staff are kept as safe as possible.

Our drop-in housing surgeries in Sherburn and Tadcaster remain suspended, as do the group Estate Walkabouts, but we still encourage tenants to raise any issues they may have with their property or their estate, directly to us.

We continue to review the position relating to the delivery of the housing service in line with government guidance and the roadmap out of lockdown.

Housing Repairs

Our repairs team are now fully operational carrying out all types of repairs in tenants' homes. The team is working hard to address those repairs reported whilst Covid-19 restrictions were in place and is making excellent progress in reducing the numbers of outstanding repairs. An extensive programme of investment is also underway via our capital improvement programme, with our external contract partners currently undertaking surveys and/or works to over 550 properties across the district. A presentation was made to the Scrutiny Committee on 17 June, I have attached the link.

[Housing Repairs Presentation to Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2021](#)

Litter campaign

I am delighted to be supporting a new anti-littering campaign this year which builds on the success of the previous Don't Be a Waster campaign.

There will be two main public phases. The first phase will focus on positive stories of individuals and communities doing their bit to tidy up their own areas and encouraging others to do the same. This builds on the significant increase in volunteer litter pickers we've seen over lockdown. We'll be working with our local green space custodians to promote the work they do and put faces to the people who are working hard to improve the district for everyone. We'll also be promoting the work the Council does through its own street cleansing teams.

The second phase later this year will focus on enforcement and the fines people can receive if they are caught littering. This part of the campaign will involve innovative new advertising avenues for the Council including Spotify, YouTube and Instagram advertising and petrol pump, bus rears, and driv

Local Government Reorganisation

I have no further information to share about the timing of the announcement on LGR, it is still expected to be before parliament recesses on the 22 July.

Partnerships

I have extended the legal better together partnership arrangement with NYCC for a further 6 months until the end of December 2021.

Leader of the Council