



Councillor Mark Crane

Leader of the Council – 28 September 2021

This report covers the period from the Council meeting on 22 July 2021. During this period, I have attended meetings of the Executive and represented the Council at local, regional and national meetings virtually. I have also attended meetings of the COVID outbreak management Board, York and North Yorkshire LEP Board and a number of District Council Network (DCN) and Local Government Association (LGA) meetings and events.

Local Government Reorganisation

I emailed all Councillors on the 21 July to share the decision of the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government which was that he supported the North Yorkshire County Council's bid. Work is progressing with MHCLG and Officers on the Structural Change Order which will be laid before parliament early in the new year.

A meeting of the interim implementation board took place on the 15th September. It was agreed that the Board would be chaired by County Councillor Carl Les and that the membership would be NYCC Cabinet 10 members and a representative from each NY District, 7 members.

The issues discussed at that meeting ranged from Governance, Workstreams and Programme Management, Structural Change Order (including warding arrangements) and communications to constituent authorities. It is proposed that the interim implementation board continues to meet monthly. I will keep you updated.

Housing Repairs

The team continues to work hard to address the backlog of repairs created during the various Covid-enforced service suspensions as well as keeping on top on newly reported ones; on average, clearing circa 70 repairs from the backlog each week. As the second additional member of the team completes his induction and becomes fully operational, this number will increase. Further resources have been requested to support the recovery efforts and to replace staff who have left through natural wastage, this is proving difficult in what is currently a very buoyant and competitive market.

Voids

Whilst voids performance overall is relatively stable and in line with targets, a high proportion of refurbishment voids continue to be received which prolongs the time in repair and adversely impacts our internal and contractor workforce. To assist in delivering such properties in a timelier manner we are preparing a tendered framework of contractors, thus freeing up internal resource for standard voids and repairs, whilst also creating additional external capacity.

We are also working with Contracts and Procurement colleagues to bring forward essential procurement requirements; thereby safeguarding business continuity. Covering such matters as essential fire safety works, electrical testing and air source heat pump

installation (amongst others), this work seeks to minimise any disruption to our customers in the lead up to vesting day of the new Authority.

Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme

Having supported this scheme two families are already safely located in the Selby District and are settling in well. We are working with the North Yorkshire Districts, North Yorkshire County Council, the Yorkshire and Humber Region and Migration Yorkshire as the initial request for relocation has increased. As a result a number of families have been temporarily accommodated in the Yorkshire Gateway Hotel until suitable permanent accommodation is allocated.

There has been a lot of offers of support and assistance to help the Afghan refugees for which we are most grateful.

Council Performance

The September Executive considered the Annual Report on Council performance for last year as well as the quarterly performance report for the first quarter of the current year. The Annual Report reflected on a year like no other. In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and the distraction of local government reorganisation the Council managed to lead the district response to Covid-19 whilst delivering against our key priorities. Key success areas included the successful rollout of a new waste collection service during the first lockdown – which contributed to improved recycling rates – whilst overall performance as measured by our KPIs was broadly in line with the previous year. The Report also reflected on some aspects of performance we were not able to maintain due to the pandemic such as aspects of housing repairs.

The latest quarterly report highlights positive work undertaken across enforcement, environmental health and licensing as the country moved out of lockdown as well as demonstrating the positive strides being taken in addressing some of the performance challenges that arose during the pandemic, not just in housing repairs and void turnaround times but also in planning.

Litter Campaign

Over the summer we have run an anti-littering campaign, following on from the success of previous Don't be a Waster campaigns. The first phase focused on promoting the fantastic work of our network of volunteers and we shared many good news stories on our social media channels and website. We supported a number of groups and individuals to carry out litter picks in their area and have provided equipment on long term loan to new groups in Bilbrough, Eggborough and Selby who all want to help make a difference to where they live.

The second phase of the campaign is focusing on enforcement and the fines available to the Council for those who don't do the right thing, particularly around littering from vehicles which can result in a fine of £75. This phase has included eye catching bus and petrol pump advertising and adverts on York Mix Radio. The Council is also using Spotify adverts for the first time which have been targeted specifically to residents within the district.

Mark Crane
Leader of the Council