



## **Councillor Mark Crane - Leader of the Council**

### **Report to Council on 21 December 2021**

This report covers the period from the Council meeting on 28 September 2021 to date. I have attended meetings of the Local Government Association (LGA and District Council Network (DCN), the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Infrastructure board and the North Yorkshire Implementation Board.

#### **Leisure**

I am pleased to advise council that we have agreed an extension of the licence agreement with the NHS for the continued use of the Summit building as a covid 19 vaccination centre until the end of March 2022.

Our leisure services continue to be provided by IHL under difficult covid 19 impacts and we are currently finalising the details of a covid 19 subsidy for next financial year. The leisure sector across England has suffered significant impacts from the pandemic and continues to experience difficult market conditions of reduced footfall whilst also bearing increased inflationary pressures such as energy costs.

#### **Housing and Assets**

Work is ongoing to finalise implementation of the restructure of the Property Services team which will bring in additional capacity. Despite significant resource pressures, the team have continued to make excellent progress delivering the backlog of repairs resulting from the multiple service interruptions due to covid 19. The number of outstanding repairs has been reduced by 82%.

Extra external contractor resource has been sourced to add to the delivery of the capital investment programme, particularly those needed to return the void properties back into use.

As part of our commitments towards de-carbonisation of our council-owned housing stock and delivery of our 'net-zero' ambitions, we have awarded a contract for delivery of air source heat pump installations. Initially targeted at those properties where solid fuel remains the primary source of heating, the programme will also focus on those larger family homes where electric only heating creates significant fuel poverty concerns for our customers.

#### **Annual Rough Sleeping Count**

The annual rough sleeping count took place on the evening of 17 November and into the morning of 18 November. Led by the Housing Options Team, staff from various departments offered their time and knowledge (and sleep) to be involved in the count allowing us to visit several areas throughout the district in the early hours of the morning.

Local authorities across England take a single night snapshot of people sleeping rough on a typical night on a single date between 1 October and 20 November. Each year we seek evidenced-based estimates from partners and this we also undertook a physical night-time count. People sleeping rough are defined as those sleeping or about to bed down in open air locations and other places including tents and make-shift shelters and the snapshot does not provide a definite number of people affected by homelessness. Although we didn't identify anyone rough sleeping on the night of the official count, the Housing Options Team are currently supporting 18 individuals staying in temporary or emergency accommodation.

## **Council Performance**

Along with Executive colleagues, I continue to monitor performance and we reviewed quarter 2 performance on 2 December. Executive noted positive work around the number of empty homes brought back into use, customer service call answering times and the time to relet council homes. Performance is at or above target on assessing planning applications and benefit claims. Officers continue to work hard to deliver services in these challenging times and good progress has also been made to reduce the number of outstanding Council house repairs. Whilst collection of housing rent, council tax and business rates are all slightly behind target we compare well to where we were this time last year on rents and rates. Our officers continue to support tenants affected by the pandemic, providing advice to help them manage their rent payments.

## **Better Together**

On Monday 6 December I chaired the Better Together meeting, good progress was reported on the service level agreements which we have in place for a range of services. The Legal service agreement has been extended until April 2023. Positive feedback was given on progress made on the local plan and work on the regeneration projects. An update given on the work on Selby Health matters where substantial progress has been made.

## **Drax**

I am delighted to inform council that Selby College and Drax have secured more than £270,000 of funding from government to develop the UK's first educational programmes in carbon capture, to enable the renewable energy company to develop a workforce fit for the future.

The training will equip Drax's employees with knowledge, skills, and practical experience, to operate the vital climate saving negative emissions technology bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS).

The initiative between Drax and Selby College will help to protect jobs, plug the skills gap, and build a workforce with the vital skills needed in the transition to net zero - and builds on an existing £180,000, five-year partnership aimed at supporting education and skills.

## **Merry Christmas**

I would like to thank all of our staff for their hard work throughout a very difficult 2021 and to wish them and members a very merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful 2022.

## **Mark Crane**

**Leader of the Council**