



Councillor Mark Crane - Leader of the Council – 19 April 2022

This report covers the period from the Council meeting on 24 February 2022. 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 LGR North Yorkshire Implementation Board.

Update on Devolution

A positive meeting with was held with the Whitehall team on Thursday 31 March led by Paul Rowsell, (Head of Governance Reform & Democracy Unit), Andrew Battarbee, Area Director, Yorkshire & North East) and Damien Dacey, (Deputy Director, English Devolution). Local Government are represented by Richard Flinton, Ian Floyd and Mike Greene.

The headlines from the day were that the presentation of the York and North Yorkshire narrative is very cohesive with the asks a showing a joined up strategic intent. They could see why all the asks were important to the sub region, notwithstanding the scale of the financial cost.

The timeline set out by the Government team has a target for a deal to be agreed before the summer recess (late July). There is then a six month period to achieve the necessary formal approvals, undertake the governance review and to complete a public consultation on the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) Scheme. This would see the scheme being submitted to Whitehall Jan 2023 and the order enacted to create a MCA in Sept/Oct 2023.

Disabled Facilities Grants and Private Sector Assistance

In March the Executive approved a new Disabled Facilities Grant (adaptations) Policy and a new Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy. The new policies will increase transparency, increases the level of discretionary grant available and introduces new assistance measures to meet local need, support those in most need and enable independent living.

The Disabled Facilities Grant is a grant that can meet or contribute towards the cost of adapting a person's home with the aim of helping eligible people stay home for longer or to live safer, healthier and more independent lives. For private residents the provision for adaptations is funded via the government and the Better Care Fund, whilst for Council Tenants, the provision is funded using the Councils Housing Revenue Account budget. The new policy for adaptations explains clearly what the process will be for all residents irrelevant of their housing tenure and this, in addition to the new provisions in the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy, will see the Council make the best use of current housing stock and maximise the spend of our Better Care Allocations.

Homes for Ukraine

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched on 14th March 2022 and is open to Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members to be sponsored to come to the UK. This is a

bespoke scheme offering a route to those who want to come to the UK who have someone willing to provide them with a home or share their home with them. The number of people who can access the scheme is uncapped and is dependent on the capacity of the sponsors who come forward. Guests will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and support. Those arriving will need to meet standard security checks prior to being issued with a visa. Sponsors will be subject to initial Police checks and then Councils will be required to undertake further checks relating to safeguarding and the property suitability. Selby Council will have a role to play in supporting the scheme but unlike previous schemes to support refugees, will not be responsible for sourcing accommodation.

Support to businesses in Tadcaster effected by the flood

Agreed to support businesses in Tadcaster as they have endured another significant Flood caused by storms Dennis and in February. The Chief Executive in consultation with me has paid £x to the businesses effected.

Leisure Services – Summit Building

As Council will know the NHS has been using the Summit building since the end of January 2021 for use as a covid 19 Vaccination facility for the residents of Selby. The extended licence was due to expire at the end of March 2022, the NHS have requested, and we have agreed, a further extension of the licence to occupy the building until the end of December 2022.

Performance

At the March Executive we had the opportunity to review Council performance for quarter 3. We are pleased to recognise many positive aspects of performance. For example, 86% of the housing repairs backlog created by the pandemic is now cleared and there has been strong performance on standard voids, empty homes, support to Small and Medium sized Enterprises, processing of planning applications, aspects of debt collection and on council complaints.

Performance challenges remain around major voids and on processing of benefits where the team has had to juggle priorities to ensure covid grants are paid and paid promptly.

The next twelve months will be challenging as we balance the impact of increasing staff turnover, preparations for local government reorganisation and emerging from the pandemic. However, I am confident that our priorities will continue to be delivered and Executive thanks officers for their hard work.

Mark Crane
Leader of the Council