North Yorkshire Councillor's Report July 2024

North Yorkshire and York Combined Authority.

A Combined Authority is where a group of councils work together across a larger area. The York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority has been created by the City of York Council and North Yorkshire Council. It is a legally recognised single body.

Its role is to use some of the money and powers that up to now have been held by central government, and work with local leaders and communities to invest in ways that will help make York and North Yorkshire a better place to live, work and do business.

The Mayor David Skaith is chair of the authority. Also, there will be two councillors from the City of York and two Councillors from North Yorkshire. The two North Yorkshire councillors are Carl Les who is leader of NYC, and Gareth Dadd who is deputy leader of NYC.

The Chair of York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Business Committee also sits on the Committee. This is an advisory role and is a non voting member.

The role of the Mayor is to work alongside local leaders to create a long term vision, secure more money and be a strong voice and champion for the region. The Mayoral Investment Fund is worth £540 million over 30 years. Funding will be devolved from central government to the region. In addition to this the Police and Crime Commissioner's functions will join the Combined Authority, which includes funding from the existing precept within council tax. Jo Coles has been appointed deputy Mayor with responsibility for policing, fire and crime.

Richmond Area Constituency Committee.

Each of the 7 Westminster Seats within the county has an Area Constituency Committee which is a North Yorkshire Council Committee on which the MP has a seat. The Committee deals with local issues and problems into which the MP can have a significant and helpful input.

Two examples of problems which I have taken to the Richmond ACC are flooding in Melsonby village (about 4 years ago) to which a representative from Northumbrian Water was despatched. Also, litter up the A66, especially 'the tunnel of shame'. Amanda Dyson, then head of Street Scene at RDC attended and although we didn't get the total litter pick we wanted because it can only be done when the road is either closed or at least cordoned off to protect the workforce, significant progress was made.

We now have a situation where 2 constituencies in the county are no longer blue following the recent elections ie. Scarborough and Harrogate, but the leader of the Council has made it absolutely clear that we will work in close harmony with the new MPs to achieve the best we possibly can for residents of North Yorkshire. The same applies to the Mayoral Authority.

Home to School Transport.

A complete review of home to school transport has taken place this year together with a public consultation. The law requires the local authority to arrange free home to school transport for children to their nearest suitable school.

The changes that we are proposing will come into effect in September 2025 and won't effect children already in the system. Under the new rules, funding will be available for children only from home to the nearest suitable school. At present, the funding the county is providing does not state nearest school, but rather the school of choice.

There are a number of important points to make regarding these changes.

1) These changes are being implemented in order to save money. The saving is estimated to be £4.2 million per annum.
2) If these changes are implemented then it will simply bring North Yorkshire in line with the policy being implemented by most other authorities throughout the country.
3) If we don't implement these savings then we will be faced with the stark choice of withdrawing front line services. This may well mean closing reception classes in certain schools. Not a pleasant position to be in.

Questions have been raised regarding various schools including Richmond. Are they going to face a fall in numbers which could potentially cause them damage? What about children on the county boundary?

At present, for every child who goes across the border to a school in the neighbouring county, two come across the border to North Yorkshire schools.

I also wish to point out that the present proposed changes to transport between the Middleton Tyas and Eppleby School sites are not part of the homes to school to transport proposals. I have tried to find out from Middleton Tyas School where they are with the changes which may or may not occur in terms of pupils' transport between the sites, but despite parents approaching me, information has not been forthcoming from the school.

Planning Matters and Scotch Corner.

The planning committee for our area ie. the area covered by the Richmond and Northallerton political constituency, excluding the national parks area who have their own planning committee, is there to determine more controversial applications or ones where the councillor in whose division an application lies, considers it to be divisive or not in keeping with the surroundings etc.

However, whilst more may be revealed on Wednesday in the King's Speech, from what has been stated historically by the government when in opposition, planning committees are unlikely to survive. I sit on the Richmond Committee and consider it to be a good scrutinising committee with authority to overturn officer's recommendations where considered appropriate.

Whilst I do not wish to use this report for political purposes, given the agenda of the new government in terms of house building and encouraging the expansion of building not only into brown field sites, but green field sites too, the many including myself who have put so much effort into 'protecting' the area around Scotch Corner and immediately to the south, may find that we have no avenue to go down to have applications refused or subject to a review. My gut reaction is that it looks as though the concreting over of the countryside could well happen at an early stage around Scotch Corner.

Windmills and solar panels are also high on the agenda now but we'll have to wait and see what comes forwards in terms of new applications. Of one thing however we can be sure, the Nimbys (not in my back yard) amongst us, and there are many, are not going to be happy.

Finally, could I ask that any applications for funds from my Locality Budget are brought forwards as soon as possible, and by the end of July latest please. As I have said previously, it looks very much as though I will have applications totalling way beyond my budget of £10,000. If anyone is waiting for estimates for work which they are going to ask for a contribution from me, please advise me of your project as soon as possible.

Best wishes,

Angus Thompson.

!5th July 2024.