

**County Council Meeting****Wednesday 16 May 2018****Leader's Statement****Devolution**

For a long time now we have been discussing the preferred geography for any devolution of powers from government with Council leaders across Yorkshire. North Yorkshire leaders, together with East Riding and City of York, have maintained a position that we want to see the widest possible geography. It appears now that a One Yorkshire solution might be achieved, subject to some reticence from parts of government, and the Secretary of State's insistence that this should be a unanimous situation. However we should now move on to consider the nature of the powers to be devolved, and to what form of governance. It is almost certain that would have to include an elected Mayor. Full Council is not the place nor the time to discuss such aspirations, so I have asked the Chief Executive to arrange a seminar date where this can be considered in some detail. And of course whatever we think is appropriate, and whatever central government agrees it will devolve, we also have to communicate to our electorate that this change to the way we do our business with government is in their best interests.

The core principles are still valuable:-

Decision making removed from Whitehall to the town hall  
Extra funding – "gainshare" - will be welcome.

**Internal devolution**

Today we will take the decision, or not, to move from 7 Area Committees to 6 Constituency Area Committees. I was on the working party that established area committees 17 or so years ago, and the boundaries then were picked quite arbitrarily. Existing DC boundaries were easier to think about and implement than creating any others. Whatever the geography, I am convinced we should empower the local member to deal with the local stuff, and constituency committees should deal with the more strategic matters that consume our budgets.

We are also introducing an environment-based locality budget to augment our successful locality budget scheme.

If we can make both these initiatives work for the benefit of our residents then we will consider further devolution of decision making and influence.

**Governance of Fire & Rescue**

The decision on this rests with the Minister for Fire & Policing. In common with nearly all our district councils, and the City of York Council, we hold to our position that the best solution in our opinion is that the Police & Crime Commissioner should take a seat on the Fire Authority, and be a 50% voting stakeholder on the Collaboration Committee, which is already working on a combined headquarters, a shared operational facility in Ripon, and a shared vehicle maintenance facility in Thirsk. We await the Minister's decision.

### **Brierley Group of companies**

As we prepare to move away from any central government grant funding, we are committed to developing a commercial arm of the Council, making traded surpluses to support our revenue budgets. A new committee of the Council, chaired by myself as Leader, has been established to provide a comprehensive oversight of these companies, notwithstanding they have their own internal governance arrangements. The first meeting was last month. I have written to group leaders to emphasise that these meetings are public meetings but are open to any Member to attend, and I want to emphasise today that Members will be very welcome to attend.

### **Tour de Yorkshire 2018**

The latest iteration of this event has been the biggest and best ever, now cementing this event in the racing calendar of Europe, eclipsed only by the Tour de France, and the Giros of Spain and Italy. The Mens` Race is now a 4 day event, and the 2 day Womens` Race is now the pre-eminent womens` cycling race in the world. Blessed by excellent weather, the race was watched by an estimated 2.6 million spectators on the roadside, in isolated locations often at the top of brutal climbs, or in communities who love to make an event of the event . Television coverage was beamed to over 140 countries, a major contribution to Welcome to Yorkshire`s promotion of the many great places to visit in our County. Over half the Tour is on North Yorkshire highways, and our visitor economy benefited from the weekend just past, and will continue to benefit for years to come.

Such an event is only a success because of detailed and careful planning.

I would like to thank all our staff, and the staff of our partners in the Districts, Boroughs, blue light services, and the Army, and of course Welcome to Yorkshire and ASO themselves, who worked so hard to make this the spectacular success it was.