

County Council Meeting

Wednesday 15 May 2019

Leader's Statement

A64

Our continuing priorities for road improvements have a common theme – improving east west connectivity. The A66 has only a little mileage left to be dualled, Kex Gill needs a bypass, and the A64 has been the subject of improvement considerations since 1913! There is speculation that Highways England are not committed to the next round of improvements from the Hopgrove roundabout to the Jinnah restaurant, because additional bridge work makes the project more expensive. This is not acceptable. We will work with our MP's, our District and Borough colleagues, and the A64 Action Group to make the strongest possible case to the Department for Transport that the A64 is a special case because of its strategic role in supporting the economy of the Coast.

Welcome to Yorkshire

2 independent enquiries have now been commissioned by the Board, (of which I, Richard Cooper (Harrogate) and Steve Parnaby (East Riding) are members) - one into the management style and the other into expenses claimed by the former Chief Executive and other senior personnel. The findings and recommendations will be made public. An interim Chair has been appointed with wide hospitality industry experience. A new Chief Executive will be recruited.

Some Councils have decided to withhold their subscriptions to W2Y. I think this is a mistake. Whatever is found to be wrong will be put right, but nobody can doubt the enormous success that W2Y has had in increasing the visitor economy from £4 bn 10 years ago to £9bn today. This success needs to continue, and we need to support the team of over 40 staff who deliver not just a world class cycle event annually, but many other major and also very local events that have transformed public perceptions that Yorkshire, especially North Yorkshire, is a great place to visit.

House of Lords report into Rural Affairs

We now have confirmation and endorsement from a Lords Select Committee about something we have been saying all along – that rural areas have lost out in the funding stakes through the actions or inactions of all governments, whatever colour. We have made representation on this and we expect that the Fairer Funding Review and subsequent spending reviews will start to address this imbalance.

Social care

Similarly, we expect that when the Brexit impasse is sorted, and the bandwidth of Parliamentary time can address other issues, that Government can address the funding position for adult social care. It's a good problem to have, more people living longer, and I'm told that there is cross party consensus in Westminster to address the problem. It is not acceptable that consideration of a subject that will shortly consume 50% of our budget continues to be delayed. We have responded as part of the County Council Network and the LGA. Now we need government to react to suggestions and come up with a national solution.

Climate Change

I'm not convinced that children should have taken a day out of school to protest – their school days are limited enough in number. However nobody could fail to be impressed by the arguments put forward by 16 year old Greta Thunberg from Sweden, and the passion with which our young people want the issue addressed. Some authorities have already addressed Climate Emergency motions. I have invited Scrutiny chairs to consider their areas of activity in the Council, and for the Executive and Management Board to examine our present activities, and those we influence, and to consider the Council's approach to future policies to address this issue.

Carl Les

3rd May, 2019