

County Councillors report July'22

Landing a Devolution Deal....

The last few weeks have been dominated by attempts to land a Devolution deal with Government. The Council has been pursuing this for some time and being able to have a Devolution deal was one of the drivers for changing the structure of local government in North Yorkshire.

We were told very early on in the process that in order to have a strong Devolution deal we needed to remove the two tier structure that operated across the County. Hence Devolution and local government re-organisation are not the same things but there is definitely a link.

We have been working in earnest with the Government for a few months now but if we are to finalise the process before the summer recess of Parliament we need to have reached some areas of broad agreement in the coming weeks.

The negotiations have involved working with colleagues in our District Councils, City of York and the Local Enterprise Partnership. We are having to push very hard for the best deal that we can given all the difficult financial headwinds that are currently being faced by Government.

Perhaps not the most timely window of opportunity to land the perfect deal, but nevertheless this is our opportunity and we need to make the absolute most of it that we can.

The last couple of weeks has seen a whole range of meetings in London, meetings between Leaders of York, North Yorkshire and Ministers with more meetings with Civil Servants in the next couple of days. It has been a very good team effort so far and I hope that we can get over the line with a deal that brings real economic opportunity to York and North Yorkshire.

LGR

The work around establishing the new Unitary Council continues. The 15 main work streams that are moving the development of the new Council are still progressing well.

We are facing some resource challenges given the very difficult recruitment climate there is at the moment but generally everything is progressing satisfactorily. One of the big issues of the moment is to involve our new elected Councillors in the programme and to that end we have recently established seven Member working groups across a whole range of areas where we will start needing to have Member decisions leading up to vesting day in April next year.

Covid

Covid is coming back into the news once again as a result of a slight increase in cases nationally. In North Yorkshire we are mirroring that very small increase.

A couple of weeks ago we had a situation of 1 in 70 people in North Yorkshire being infected with the virus and that has moved to 1 in 50 people or 2% of the population which is exactly in line with the England position.

The latest increase is being driven by the BA4 and the BA5 sub variants of Omicron. These particular variants are causing some increased rates in other countries across the world which is all being closely monitored. These sub variants of Omicron appear to be more transmissible than the previous variant with a similar type of illness resulting.

There is no need for any general alarm although it is very much worth thinking about those tested safeguards of being cautious in crowded spaces, improving ventilation indoors. It is also sensible that anyone with a symptoms of a respiratory infection and who have a high temperature or who feel unwell should stay at home and avoid contact with others.