

## **County Councillors report February 2023**

### **Future of transport for North Yorkshire to be shaped by new council**

Residents are set to be asked to share their priorities for the future of transport in the county to help the new North Yorkshire Council to shape its plan for the coming decades.

The council, which comes into operation on April 1, will develop a new local transport plan to guide the management and progress of travel infrastructure and options across the county.

The Government requires a detailed plan to set out how the council will maintain and improve all aspects of local transport, including road, rail, bus, cycle and walking infrastructure. The most recent local transport plan came into effect in 2016, but with more people are using electric vehicles, advances in technology and the lifestyle changes prompted by Covid-19 pandemic, both in terms of work and travel, this review is most timely.

The new local transport plan would link closely with the new council's wider strategies to support the growth of the local economy and sustainable development. And of course with the prospect of combined authority under an elected Mayor, an updated strategic view will be invaluable to shaping the transport map across both North Yorkshire and the city of York.

### **Government set to be asked to progress plans for devolution deal**

Widespread support from leading organisations and the public has been gathered as the Government is set to be asked to forge ahead with plans to bring a host of benefits including new jobs, more affordable housing and measures to tackle climate change to North Yorkshire.

Hundreds of residents, businesses and charity and voluntary organisations took part in the biggest public consultation ever undertaken by councils in North Yorkshire to collect the public's views on a proposed devolution deal.

The combined authority is set to be overseen by an influential metro mayor elected under the proposed devolution deal, co-ordinating key strategic projects ranging from major transport improvements and boosting skills and education to providing more affordable housing in York and North Yorkshire.

The engagement was conducted under the Let's Talk banner, which asked for the public's views on the proposed devolution deal as well as how the new North Yorkshire Council, which will launch on April 1, will serve local communities and also its financial priorities.

A total of 1,943 people completed the survey in full for the devolution element of the public consultations, expressing views on a range of topics including housing, transport, skills and employment and climate change. The response rate is understood to have compared favourably to other devolution engagement campaigns with the public elsewhere in the country.

The eight-week consultation was launched on October 21 and ran until December 16 last year, and views were gathered through face-to-face engagement events, an online survey and via letters and emails. A concerted effort was made to engage with as many sections of society, including the younger generation and communities across North Yorkshire, and documents were available in nine different languages including Arabic, Kurdish, Romanian, Polish Ukrainian and Bengali.

Most respondents were generally in favour of the proposed governance of the devolution deal, with organisations including the Tees Valley Combined Authority, the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Yorkshire Food, Farming and Rural Network recognising that it is a tried and tested model for building strong local leadership with new powers.

A total of 54 per cent of respondents online either strongly supported or supported the proposed governance of the mayoral combined authority, while 32 per cent were opposed or strongly opposed with the remainder not expressing a view or stating they did not know.

The majority of responses were positive about the transfer of powers under the proposed devolution deal and the potential to look at transport in a broader strategic way. Organisations including Community First Yorkshire, East Riding of Yorkshire Council and the LEP highlighted how taking a strategic approach as to how York and North Yorkshire connect to neighbouring areas could benefit economic growth across the region.

The public engagement also highlighted that affordable, low-carbon housing should be made a priority under the proposed devolution deal. Several organisations, including Zero Carbon Harrogate and Northern Power Grid, suggested that zero carbon or low-energy housing should be a formal requirement as part of plans. The Government agency, Homes England, said it is keen to work with the mayoral combined authority to increase local housing supply.

Work to curb climate change that is due to be introduced through devolution was welcomed, especially to reduce carbon dioxide emissions as well as promoting more sustainable transport.

Both the University of York and BioYorkshire, which is overseeing a 10-year plan for sustainable innovation, saw themselves as useful allies for the mayoral combined authority for both economic growth and achieving net zero targets for carbon dioxide emissions. The two organisations also strongly supported the net zero, climate change and natural capital delivery commitments that have been set out in the proposed devolution agreement.

The Yorkshire Food, Farming and Rural Network also recognised that the food and farming sectors have a major contribution to make towards the ambition of reducing carbon emissions to net zero.

A total of 63 per cent of respondents online either strongly supported or supported plans for the proposed combined authority to work with the Government on climate change, while 23 per cent were opposed or strongly opposed with the remainder not expressing a view or stating they did not know.

However, concerns were expressed by some members of the public about ensuring the mayoral combined authority remains democratically accountable to the electorate, especially as it will serve such a vast area across England's largest county. Other respondents voiced reservations that a top tier of local government was being introduced with the combined authority over-arching both the new North Yorkshire Council and the existing City of York Council.

The full results of the public engagement on the proposed devolution deal can be found at [Appendix 1 - Consultation Outputs Report.pdf \(northyorks.gov.uk\)](#)

## **Ward member grants**

The current tranche of Councillor community grants has now closed.

I have allocated my full budget of both Craven District and North Yorkshire county council grants to a range of projects and organisations, including energy efficiency improvements to community spaces, support for youth sports and updated safety equipment for the Cave Rescue Organisation.

Looking forward to the new unitary Council, the recommendation at this time is for the existing scheme to continue on the same terms as the current NYCC scheme, with a funding allocation of £10 000 per member.

Once approved I would be looking to have grants available from mid-May until the end of January 2024.