

County Councillors report November 2021

The budget

The Chancellors budget and spending review statement was announced contained some important announcements for local government. The main headline for local government was an increase in funding of 3%, in real terms for each of the next 3 years. We won't know how this will effect NYCC until we get the more detailed local government settlement later in the year.

It is however welcomed that there has been an increase in spending, the first real terms increase in spending for some considerable time. It will be very much needed given the pressures that we are under at the moment in terms of adult social care, rising costs for children social care placements, as well as overall inflationary and demand pressures across the council.

In addition, there was funding for other specific areas that effect local government, including schools, early years, youth facilities, initiatives around supporting families, and increasing adult skills funding, funding for local transport schemes, etc. The overall quantum of increase in funding in areas relating to local government was not expected, but is very welcome.

What was particularly welcome is a commitment to a 3 year funding package which will give the council greater certainty in its financial planning, particularly as we move through the challenging process of local government reorganisation. But all of the announcements made are at a national level and as ever the devil is in the detail, which will not be revealed to us until we get our specific local government grant settlement, usually later in November or early December.

Covid

The context for the budget and spending review was of course the current pandemic and being able to move the economy forward in the years ahead. The here and now picture with Covid-19 is still pretty stark and North Yorkshire at this moment in time has some of the highest covid rates in the country, and some of the highest rates that we have experienced during the pandemic. The table below sets out the current situation as of last week;

Area Name	7-day rate per 100,000	Average Number of new Cases per Day (7 day RA)
Ryedale	633.8	50.1
Craven	619.5	50.6
Harrogate	573.3	131.7
Selby	542.9	70.3
North Yorkshire	542.5	479.0
Scarborough	520.4	80.9
Hambleton	512.0	67.0
England	479.1	38521.1
Richmondshire	370.4	28.4

As you can see from the above, North Yorkshire remains significantly above the national average. It is pleasing to see that the very high rates we have seen in Harrogate have decreased over the last week, but other parts of the county still remain very high. The main driver for this position has been school aged children with knock on impacts into the age groups that are clearly the parents and families of those children. The numbers of people in hospitals that serve the North Yorkshire area have increased over the last few weeks. The number of beds occupied stand at 185, with 20 people in intensive care. Significant pressure remains on the health and social care system. We should as well note the very sad statistic that in the last week there have been 13 more deaths in North Yorkshire mentioning Covid-19 as a factor.

The overall ongoing position with Covid-19 remains really uncertain at the moment. We have quite a peculiar position of city areas with lower areas at the moment than more rural parts. But overall across the county rates are high. There is a view that as school children develop a level of immunity through vaccination and previous infection, the situation in schools and therefore the rest of the community will calm down to some degree. However, that doesn't appear to be happening just yet and of course there are other potential issues such as flu as a complicating factor.

Given the ongoing high covid rates we will carry on maintaining the approach of NYCC staff working from home where possible and only coming into offices when needed. This may well include supervision meetings, staff meetings, some colleagues needing to work in an office space or to meet with clients etc.