

LEADER'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL MARCH 2017

Putting Bradford on the mainline

Transport for the North later this year will be making their recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport on how best to make an investment in the transport infrastructure of the North to gain the most economic benefit. This is a once in a generation opportunity to influence transport decisions in the North. Connectivity from East to West by rail and road is the subject of much discussion. Politicians in Bradford across the political divide have all spoken up for the district and how important it is for us to be better connected to major transport links and particularly to have a stop on Northern Powerhouse Rail. Businesses are also firmly behind championing the cause. I would like to thank everybody for their help.

We are working hard to make the case for Bradford. I am meeting with more key decision-makers in the next few weeks to further promote the benefits of including Bradford on Northern Powerhouse Rail. I have met with Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport, twice in the last few months and he has been encouraging with his responses. West Yorkshire Combined authority and the Leeds City Region LEP are also in support. There is however much more work to do. The old-fashioned economic measures which Westminster civil servants use to justify transport infrastructure spend have not served the North well. Government need to change their approach if significant investment is to be made.

Education Opportunity Fund

Just the day after I'd given the last Leader's Report to Full Council, the news came that Government had chosen Bradford as an Education Opportunity Area, one of only 12 in the country. We are pleased with this investment which gives us a share of £72 million of funding. However it also says to us, that the achievements of our children here in Bradford matter not just to us, but to the nation. We are absolutely an area of opportunity and in order to realise that opportunity we now have access to additional resource and research that we didn't have before. The first meeting with DfE officials has taken place, a board will be established and a plan drafted. Delivery should start in the Autumn term.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

The last meeting of the Combined Authority was held on 2nd February. Devolution was on the agenda. At the time no response had been received from Government on the Leeds City Region (with a Mayor) proposal which had been submitted some time ago. It was resolved to chase Government for a formal response to this proposal as well as, in the meantime, pursuing options for a larger geography which

could then unlock a Leeds City Region deal beneath it. A response has now been received from Sajid Javed, Secretary of State, which is polite but firm in its view that the Leeds City Region proposal cannot progress. This is naturally disappointing but we will continue to explore different geographies to achieve devolution which we all know Yorkshire needs. Yorkshire leaders from all corners of the county subsequently met together on 9th March and, in spite of the devolution challenges, we agreed to work together more closely in future on strategic issues which are common to us all such as transport.

Funding for Adult Social Care

Since Full Council passed the budget Government has committed additional funding for Adult Social Care for the next three years. The numbers for Bradford are as follows:

2017/18 £10.479m

2018/19 £6.555m

2019/20 £3.247m

We are still waiting for Government advice on what the parameters are for how we can use the money. There has been an intimation that how it is used will need to be decided with Health agencies but the detail of this is still to be confirmed.

This funding is of course welcome however it is a temporary fix and does not change the Council's eventual financial position in 2020. The Government will provide zero grant funding to local authorities by 2020. The importance of the Government actively pursuing a solution for how Adult Social Care should be funded in this country is still therefore a matter of urgency and something which both the Labour and Tory Parties in Bradford have urged Government to do at pace.

RSA Inclusive Growth Commission

The RSA successfully launched its Principles in Practice document at Bradford College on 6th March. Andrew Percy MP, Northern Powerhouse Minister attended, as did the Chair of the Commission Stephanie Flanders.

The event attracted people from across the country. In addition to speakers from the world of Education, Politics and Business, a Community Panel with some young residents of Bradford spoke particularly eloquently about their place in the world and how growth and opportunity so easily passes young people by.

The work has been supported by the Local Government Association's Cities Group, also by Core Cities, Key Cities and London Councils. The challenge now ahead of us is to influence national Government decision-making with the findings of the report.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER

Councillor Cooke

Thank you and thank you in particular for the piece on Adult Social Care and the clarification of the funding levels. Can you call us the Conservative Party please rather than the Tory Party, not that I mind particularly, but just for form sake. Can you just outline what we do know so far and what the kind of process that we have got to go through to look at the use of the money? In other words is it going to be a report to Executive, is it going to be done by fiat and by officers? How are we going to deal with this because it is a substantial amount of money and obviously we all want to make sure that that money goes to get the best outcomes for the elderly and vulnerable people that it is intended to support. If you just want to outline how your thinking has got to now appreciating that we still not quite got all the information from Government yet.

Councillor Hinchcliffe

Thank you from the Leader of the Conservative Party. Yes, Adult Social Care, obviously we are grateful to have the money but as you say it is still unclear really as to how we are able to spend it and how we are allowed to spend it. I would imagine it is going to go through a few boards because I think one of the prime ones has got to be Health and Wellbeing Board as well which you are a member and therefore all our Health Partners need to be consulted on how it is being spent as well. As we have done with the budget all the way along with Health Partners in trying to make sure that the Health and Wellbeing Board is fully abreast of what we are doing on that. So we do not have a clear plan. Obviously it needs to be done quickly. We need the advice from Government quite quickly to be able to get on with it because it is meant to start from 3 April when the new financial year starts. Yes it will have to be done in a public forum and obviously Councillors will get the opportunity to contribute and to scrutinise how that money is spent just as they did with the entire budget process. Obviously it is coming in late in the day outside the budget process. It is not something we are used to working with but of course we will use every penny to good effect in this district.

Councillor Jeanette Sunderland

A couple of questions. First of all a comment to say thank you to all of those, it is good news in this report and it is thank you to all those Members who have been involved in cross party lobbying for additional funds for Bradford. It clearly works and we clearly have an effect and we should acknowledge the impact that Members of Parliament, Members of the House of Lords and ordinary Council Members can and do have when they participate in that sort of approach. A comment on the education opportunity fund to ask the Leader what involvement will elected Members of this Council have with the Board?

Councillor Hinchcliffe

It will certainly go to Education Improvement Strategy Board which of course yourself Councillor Sunderland and actually Councillor Davies are on for the Conservatives. I have taken part as has Councillor Imran Khan in the first meeting with the Department of Education officials so for the kick off meeting, see how other places are learning from that. Officers have gone away to do some data crunching. See what the analysis looks like. It is a programme which can be suited to Bradford. It is not a one size fits all. They are also keen on evidence so evidence making rather than just initiatives being rolled out across the country which I am pleased to hear about. So it is evidence based policy making which we might not have heard of for a while. Naturally it can go to Education Scrutiny but Education Improvement Strategy Board it will be going to and of course happy to give a briefing. I am sure Michael Jameson (Strategic Director Children's Services) who is behind you will be able to give you a briefing on that as to where we are but it is early days. The development plan will be developed over the summer ready for launch and implementation from September so it is early days but we are very pleased to have it and, you are right, it is about collaboration if we can all speak one voice on these key issues then we can get things done.

Councillor Jeanette Sunderland

Thank you and to follow on. An additional question. On the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, in the response to whatever proposal was put forward you have had a response from the Secretary of State who says that he suggests that you now put forward an option which meets all of the criteria as agreed with other devolution deals. Can you explain to Members what progress you have actually made on that?

Councillor Hinchcliffe.

What we have asked officers to do at West Yorkshire Combined Authority level is to seek that meeting with Sajid Javid that he mentioned in that letter, we will pursue that and see what options, what are the boxes he needs ticking to get a deal over the line. Obviously we have had a few knock backs in getting devolution through but we are still pushing for a right solution for Bradford. I think Bradford does need devolution. We need that direct relationship with Government particularly over skills for example. It is really important we get more say over how skills money is spent in this district and therefore we will keep pushing for it even though the Government have not been quite happy with the solutions that have been put forward so far but we will keep working on it. So the next step is a meeting with the Minister hopefully.