

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF COUNCIL 15 JANUARY 2019

Yorkshire Leaders

Yorkshire Leaders met last week to discuss a wide range of issues - Brexit, Northern Powerhouse, Strategic Transport and of course, Yorkshire Devolution. There was continued and vocal support for Yorkshire devolution from both Conservative and Labour leaders together with a growing impatience to receive a response from the Secretary of State. Members will recall that West Yorkshire leaders had a constructive, positive meeting with the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, Jake Berry, before Christmas. The One Yorkshire campaign, led by MPs John Grogan and Robert Goodwill, has raised £30,000 of funding from JRF which enables them to develop the campaign plan. Because Cllr Steve Parnaby is stepping down from East Riding of Yorkshire Council this year, Cllr Carl Les, Conservative Leader of North Yorkshire County Council has agreed to take his place as Joint Chair of Yorkshire Leaders.

Local Government Finance Settlement

After extensive delays the Government finally released the Local Government Settlement without a debate in parliament, just before the Christmas recess. We were pleased to be successful in our Business Rates Pool application. West Yorkshire had collaborated with North Yorkshire to put in a joint bid to Government to retain 75% instead of 50% of our business rates. This means an increase in our funding of £3.7 million next year. This is however a one-off amount and no commitment is yet made to us for 2020/21. Additionally Government found a one-off surplus nationally of £180 million for 19/20, of which Bradford's share is £2.1 million. Additionally we will be receiving £607,000 additional in New Homes Bonus. The Council budget we are consulting on currently assumes using £6.5 million of reserves in 19/20 and similarly there is a gap of £28 million in 20/21. The one-off monies from Government are therefore very much needed, but they are nowhere near enough to fulfil Theresa May's commitment that austerity is over. Government austerity still blows a chill wind over Local Government.

Fair Funding Formula for Councils

The latest iteration of the Government's attempt to redistribute council funding was released just before Christmas. This matter has been debated in the Council Chamber before and our concerns aired. As anticipated Rurality and Sparsity are projected to have greater weight than previously when it comes to allocation of funding to local authorities. Deprivation, whilst being part of the formula for Adults and Children's Social Care, is not currently supposed to be considered for all other council services. This is extremely worrying. We will be making representations both as Bradford and through the LGA before the consultation response deadline of 21st February. I would encourage other parties to do likewise, such changes will adversely affect all our residents, no matter where you represent in the Bradford District.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Combined Authority meeting took place on 13th December. At this meeting the Hard Ings scheme in Keighley progressed to Decision Point 4. The total project value of this scheme will be £10.3 million. Development costs of up to £150,000 for the Ben Rhydding park and ride scheme were also approved. Transforming Cities bid to Government was approved which includes £4 million for Bradford Forster Square station was also approved.

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan plus the Energy Strategy and Delivery Plan were also approved.

West & North Yorkshire Collaboration regarding flood prevention

I am pleased to be working with Cllr Mike Ellis, in my capacity as Chair of West Yorkshire Combined Authority, to establish a bidding proposition to Government for more investment in flood prevention. Bringing West and North Yorkshire councils together as a task and finish group, we aim to establish a proposition which would bring in funding from Government for flood prevention on commercial land in particular. There are no guarantees of success, given the economic climate, but we have already found the conversations with Yorkshire Water and the Environment Agency on this subject very useful and supportive.

Transport for the North

The Strategic Outline Business Case for the Transport for the North plan is due to go to the TfN board for approval on the 7th February. This is the document which will make the case for Northern Powerhouse Rail to the DfT with a view to getting a commitment from HMT in the Spending Review later this year. We continue to put the case for Bradford to be a city centre stop on a new line between Manchester and Leeds, Northern Powerhouse Rail, however I would ask all members of Council to keep campaigning and supporting this objective. Northern Powerhouse Rail is a big financial investment for Government and given the uncertain economic times we live in, there are no guarantees.

LEP Review

The Government has given us the go ahead to proceed with a merger of the Leeds City Region LEP and the North Yorkshire & York LEP. The first meeting of the two partners to discuss the details of how we are going to establish this bigger economic footprint is taking place later this week. I will be representing the Leaders of the Leeds City Region LEP in these negotiations.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER

Councillor John Pennington

Thank you Leader for your report. Just one item I would like to investigate a little bit further. Have you got any insight into a very recent press suggestion that Devolution may be granted to an even bigger Northern Powerhouse region and if that was to happen what are your thoughts on an assembly that may even have tax raising powers.

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe

I was certainly encouraged to hear the ambition of the Minister yesterday in the Yorkshire Post around giving the North more powers and quite frankly we are just

willing to talk on any basis about Devolution to Yorkshire or to the North because we realise that given Westminster is so tied up in Brexit at the moment, we in the North are much better equipped and have the capacity to make decisions about our own future. So really welcome positive thoughts from the Minister about how to give us more powers and finance in the North. First step though is to get Yorkshire Devolution underway. I would welcome further discussions with the Secretary of State James Brokenshire on that subject as soon as possible.

Councillor Jeanette Sunderland

Thank you Councillor Hinchcliffe for your quite detailed report. It is a bit odd now that we have to wait for the Council meetings now when there is so much going on. But at one time the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the Leeds City Region Economic Footprint was the only game in town, the only thing that would secure Bradford's position but we now seem to be moving towards Bradford being part of a fight much larger economic footprint. I just wonder if you can tell Members and assure Members what it is you are doing to secure Bradford's position in what is now going to become a much larger pool.

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe

Thank you Councillor Sunderland. I think if you speak to other local authorities across West and North Yorkshire they are probably quite concerned about Bradford because Bradford is a big urban centre, 530,000 people, much bigger than a lot of those North Yorkshire districts and they are seeking a lot of the time reassurance that Bradford and its neighbour Leeds are not going to dominate the discussion. In a few items and the report I talk about how we are working together as a LEP and also the LEP Review about North and west are going to be combined together. We are about to embark on how that is going to work and you will notice from my report that I as Leader of Bradford and Chair of the Combined Authority and the Leader on that from West Yorkshire talking to North Yorkshire and York about how we do that together. So we have to fight all the time and that is not just in the Yorkshire Footprint in a Leeds City Region Footprint but also in the country for the investment we need and I refer in the report to Transport for the North in getting Bradford as a stop on Northern Powerhouse Rail between Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, we have got away with that, we have got a prize with that and get Bradford on that line but there is still a long way to go before we achieve the aim of getting the City Centre station for Bradford on the Northern Powerhouse Line. We have to make sure we raise our game regionally to work with our allies across the North and across Yorkshire to get the deal that we want and to get the investment we need and also in Westminster. There is no easy answer to where that starts and finishes but having friends and allies across the North will help us get what we need in Bradford and we are mutually supportive across authorities in the North to make sure we get the investment we so badly need and which has been so lacking in recent years

Councillor Mike Ellis

Transport for the North – I have read a newspaper report that freight will not be included. It is not being considered at the moment. Is this true and do you think this is wise.

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe

No I think freight is very much part of the Transport for the North Strategic Plan. It may be that the SOBC for it comes later on, I am not quite certain of that but I can certainly check and let you know but nobody has told me that freight has come out.