

Leader's Report - July 2021

New Metro Mayor arrives at West Yorkshire Combined Authority

We were pleased to welcome our newly elected Metro Mayor Tracy Brabin at the first Executive meeting of the civic year here in Bradford where she outlined her Mayoral pledges and spoke of Bradford being the “greatest area of opportunity” in West Yorkshire. Mayor Brabin is also strongly supportive of Bradford being a stop on Northern Powerhouse Rail and has written to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chancellor in support.

Transport

I am pleased that as Bradford Leader I have taken the transport portfolio for West Yorkshire Combined Authority. It is a hugely important time for transport in the region. We are pushing ahead with West Yorkshire Mass Transit connecting all the cities and towns of West Yorkshire. This means bidding into the £4.2 billion fund Government have set aside for intra regional transport in September this year.

We are also pushing for a Bradford stop on Northern Powerhouse Rail on a through-line between Manchester and Leeds. The Metro Mayor has had assurances from Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport that he does take the Bradford proposition seriously. However we are waiting for the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) to be published by Government which will outline how the major rail infrastructure in the North will connect ready for construction. We would all like to see Bradford highlighted in this document.

Of concern is that LNER is proposing a timetable change which would reduce London services out of Bradford Forster Square and Shipley from two per day to one per day. This is completely unacceptable. I have already voiced my concerns to LNER and also to the Secretary of State for Transport. There are railworks that need to be completed so that Bradford Forster Square can accommodate the new Azuma trains. These must be accelerated in order that Bradford not only can keep its existing services but have them increased to the 7 trains a day which were originally promised through the franchise agreement pre nationalisation

Covid-19

Infection rates in the country are high. In Bradford at the time of writing we were 73rd in the country for infections. This equates to a positive infection rate of 7.1% and 290 cases per 100,000 people. In younger age groups the rate is a lot higher. Whilst hospital admissions are down from 59 last week to 43 this week, I look towards the lifting of all restrictions on 19th July with some trepidation. Even from 19th July we must all exercise caution when in social settings. Obviously everyone must get the jab and our local NHS is doing a wonderful job round the clock. However it is my view that we must also use our common sense and maintain social distancing, wash our hands and also wear a mask to protect ourselves and others when in a crowded space.

Economic Recovery

The Economic Recovery effort will need to be vast. Without significant investment, the state will find it very costly to maintain communities in poverty nationally. In West Yorkshire we have an ambitious plan to effect economic recovery with a plan costed at £1.4 billion however Government has not shown any willingness to fund region-led economic recovery. The West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Board Chaired by Mayor Brabin is now going to review the plan. Here in Bradford in the last month we have invested £4 million in important elements of recovery as follows:

- £1 million on a Youth Offer for 16-24 year olds
- £2 million for regeneration and enterprise
- £1 million for visible services

Captain Sir Tom Moore Remains interred in Keighley

We were pleased to be able to support the family of Captain Sir Tom Moore to lay his remains to rest in one of our Keighley Cemeteries after the death of their dear father and grandfather recently. We are so proud of Keighley's association with such a hero of our times. His spirit, energy and resilience to keep going, even when it's tough, showed us all the way. We offer our heartfelt condolences to his family.

Thank You

I'd like to say a big Thank You to all our staff for everything they have done over the last 16 months. I accompanied Mayor Brabin to Keighley last Sunday to say thank you to staff in a care home, retail staff at Morrisons and to volunteers at Keighley Worth Valley Railway before going to Bradford where we were treated to a great performance from a multi-generational choir. Staff have really been sorely tested during the pandemic and the impact will be felt for a long time to come. The least we can do is say Thank You in gratitude.