

County Councillors report September 2021

Local Government Reorganisation

Next Steps

The following stages will need to be progressed in order to create the operation of a new unitary on 1 April 2023

Stage 1 - From decision to the creation of a Structural Change Order

An important element in the process of creating a unitary authority is the drafting and making of the Structural Change Order (SCO). The purpose of the Order is to facilitate the transition from the existing councils in North Yorkshire to create a single unitary council. The Order will define the basic governance and operating principles in the lead-up to the new North Yorkshire unitary authority.

The SCO is made by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in the exercise of his powers within the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It is anticipated that the Order will be made in January to March 2022. Prior to the making of the Order it will be appropriate to consider joint governance arrangements between the County Council and the District Councils to ensure the relevant Members and officers are working together to prepare for a smooth transition to the new governance structure.

The Elections that are due in May 2022 will be to elect Councillors who will run the County Council for the first year and will then sit on the new unitary authority for the following four years. The Case for Change provided that there would be circa 90 councillors for the new unitary authority. In order to deliver this the SCO would need to include proposed Wards for the new council. It is understood from the Boundary Commission could not carry out a full boundary review prior to the Elections in 2022, however they would be able to carry out a full boundary review prior to the next Elections in 2027.

Process for Submitting Initial Ward for the new Authority

Government has at least three choices in determining the number of councillors for the new authority which include:

- (a) Keeping the existing 72 County Council Divisions as Wards for the new authority.

(b) Doubling the number of councillors to 144 for the new authority.

(c) Choosing a number between 72 and 144 and providing new Ward boundaries for the new authority.

The Case for Change stated that the County Council would seek to work with the Boundary Commission to carry out a review or provide an alternative method. The Boundary Commission have stated that they cannot carry out a full review prior to the Elections but they would be happy to do so within the first term of the unitary councillors. The Council's Case for Change stated there would be circa 90 councillors and it is understood that the Secretary of State will make the decision on the exact number of councillors and the geography of the Ward arrangements. The Secretary of State will consider the views from the constituent councils within North Yorkshire and has asked for views by mid-September 2021. It is understood that the Secretary of State will consider the following criteria in drawing up new Ward boundaries for the initial term:

* The Boundary Commission's guidance on boundary reviews.

* The appropriate number of councillors for the new authority.

* Considering the suitable range of variance of electors to councillors per Ward across North Yorkshire.

* The desire not to split up existing communities.

Stage 2 - Implementation of Structural Change Order to Elections in May 2022

The SCO will provide that an Implementation Executive will be responsible for the political governance of the implementation of the new authority prior to Elections. The SCO will also provide for an implementation team of officers that will consist of colleagues from the County Council and Districts working together to deliver the implementation plan to create the new North Yorkshire unitary council. As it is envisaged that the Structural Change Order will not come into effect until March 2023, it will be necessary to create joint working relationships between Members and officers prior to this date that will act as a precursor to the official Implementation Executive and Implementation Team.

Stage 3 - After Elections prior to Vesting Date of 1 April 2023

The newly elected Councillors will be responsible for the political oversight of the County Council for the first year and then will be responsible for North Yorkshire Council for the next four years. The first Executive after the Elections will take over the responsibility of the Implementation Executive to provide political oversight of the Implementation Strategy.

Refugee Afghan workers

North Yorkshire is offering safe homes to Afghan workers (qualifying under the government's Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy), who have supported the UK in Afghanistan but who now more than ever face a threat to their lives in that country.

So far, the councils in North Yorkshire have resettled eight families (42 people). The people we are welcoming to North Yorkshire have shown great courage in supporting British troops and other personnel in the face of high personal risk.

Thanks to good partnership work across a range of organisations, including our district colleagues, health partners and the Refugee Council we are confident that the families' settlement and integration will be safe and as smooth as possible. This also includes support for getting the adults into employment – some of whom we think will get into employment quickly due to their skills sets and previous employment experience. We also provide English language support for the adults who have no or only a basic understanding of the English language. NYCC also has a small team of staff responsible for providing support to the children and the schools they are admitted to in relation to English as an Additional Language provision and advising upon pastoral care requirements.

Focus on face-to-face teaching when schools return

As the vast majority of pupils return to school in North Yorkshire on Tuesday, September 7, they will find many of their school's familiar routines have returned. The need for children to be taught in bubbles, the use of face masks in school for older pupils and staggered start and finish times to the school day will no longer be required. The new term should see the opportunity for children and young people to mix with peers in different year groups at break times and school assemblies, and the chance to move around the school during the school day to make use of specialist classrooms such as laboratories or sports facilities. For more information on the return to schools, visit the website: [Focus on face-to-face teaching when schools return | News | North Yorkshire County Council](#)

Covid related points

In general the covid rates across the county are relatively unchanged, the North Yorkshire average is at 308 against an England average of 300. While the overall relation between infection rates and Hospitalisation rates continues to be favourable in comparison to where we were a year ago.

The focus on vaccinations is very much on younger age groups, and the latest data is that across North Yorkshire of the 62,000 residents between 16 and 25, around 2/3 have received at least one dose of Covid-19 vaccine. We clearly need this number to increase and in time for people in this age group to have both doses.