

County Councillor report August 21

Covid

In terms of covid, it seems as if the very welcome and significant falls in covid rates that we had seen in the last 2 weeks have plateaued out. The current average for North Yorkshire is 257 cases per 100,000. The county has been at this rate for around the last 4/5 days.

There are over 200 new covid cases in the county every day, and the general levels that we have of around 250 cases per 100,000 are still relatively high looking back over the last year. In terms of the local authority areas around us, they too have seen reductions but are generally all at a higher rate than North Yorkshire. Redcar and Cleveland stands at just over 400, Middlesbrough at just over 470, Leeds is at 380 and the highest in Yorkshire is currently Sheffield at around 490.

The number of people in hospitals servicing North Yorkshire has stayed at a relatively constant rate, with 141 people with covid in hospital and 22 of these in intensive care.

The upshot of all of this is that we still need to be on our guard against the disease. Encourage people to come forward to have the vaccine where appropriate. It is also still recommended and advisable to wear face masks in busy places, i.e. supermarkets and other retail, and to take care around inviting people into your own home. Meeting people outdoors is a much better idea.

Youth employment – Kickstart scheme

More than 100 North Yorkshire employers have now signed-up to a scheme designed to improve employment opportunities for young people.

The Kickstart scheme is a national initiative introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Richmond MP Rishi Sunak last year to help unemployed people aged 16 to 24 into high-quality jobs.

It was part of an emergency package announced to off-set the impact of the pandemic on young people, when it became clear they were most likely to be in jobs affected by the pandemic.

In North Yorkshire, more than 100 employers are now offering hundreds of Kickstart job placements to young people. They include work placements as nursery nurses, site assistants, teaching assistants, dispensing pharmacy placements and even as

heritage maintenance workers, restoring and transforming local historic sites for community benefit.

Under the scheme, the Government pays the national minimum wage, national insurance and pension contributions for 25 hours a week during the six-month work placement and employers can top up the wage, if they wish.

North Yorkshire County Council has acted as a gateway organisation, allowing employers to apply and access the Kickstart scheme through the council and putting in place employability support for small businesses and charities.

The County Council has appointed 83 Kickstart candidates in this way, directly employing 28.

<http://www.nyresourcing.co.uk/northyorkshirekickstart/>

Local Government Reorganisation

As has been widely publicised, the decision has fallen in favour of the single unitary authority covering the current NYCC footprint. This will bring together the functions of the 7 district councils and the County council in to one organisation.

The work to complete this will start with immediate effect as the schedule below lays out.

Stages – detail

1. Decision Made (Jul 21) – *immediate communications*
2. Decision to SCO (Jul 21 – Jan/Feb 22) – *informal stage, working with Districts, negotiate final SCO and final wards for unitary elections*
3. SCO to Elections (Feb 22 – May 22) – *formal structures in place – Implementation Executive and Implementation Team, prepare elections, put in arrangements to run the County Council for a year and implement the changes for April 23*
4. Elections to Vesting Day (May 22 – Apr 23) – *new council members elected and Executive in place, new constitution, recruitment of top tier officers, transition to new council, locality arrangements*
5. Year 1 and beyond (Apr 23 onwards) – *further transition & transformation, Boundary Commission review*

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*SCO – Structural Change Order

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Structural Change Order

- Creates the new unitary authority from 1st April 2023
- Sets out the timing of elections : 5th May 2022
- Specifies Wards and number of Councillors
- Imposes Legal duties on the authorities:
 - Duty of Councils to cooperate and consult with each other
 - Work together to prepare for the transfer of the functions, property, rights and liabilities to the new unitary authority
 - Duty to provide information as reasonably requested

More detail will come available in the coming weeks and months, but this gives a broad sense of the timeline involved and what each stage means.