

Report February 2016

During the last three months, there have been three major themes running through meetings at NYCC. Devolution has been a very difficult topic to progress and has required protracted discussions with neighboring authorities York, West and East Yorkshire areas. Then there's been the worry for us all around flooding culminating in the spectacular collapse of the bridge at Tadcaster. Many of the villages I represent are like us in having either a stream or the Gipsy Race running through them. For most of the year these are benign attractive features within our villages however I am sure we are all aware that they have the potential to cause devastation if not managed. With this in mind, I have been working with two of our parish council representatives and volunteers to form a water course management group - prevention is always better than cure! It is hoped that once I get this group up and running here, it will form a template which other villages could adapt and adopt.

Last but not least there has been the very complex local government finance settlement. The first details of this settlement painted a very bleak picture for rural shire counties such as NYCC however, after strong representation we now find ourselves in a better position. We still have to make the same savings but we have a longer time frame in which to do so. We have delivered £116 million of savings since 2011 but have to make further savings of £50.3m between now and 2020. This equates to an aggregate savings requirement of £166.3m which is broadly a 33% reduction in the Councils spending power since 2011.

It's worth pointing out here that "savings" don't always equate to "cuts" or a reduction in service. Within my own portfolio (Children's Social Care) we have made some quality transformations and I was delighted to hear that the new and innovative "No Wrong Door" project in Scarborough has just been given a grading by OFSTED of "Outstanding" in all areas and our Children and Young People's Service has been appointed as one of nine 'Partners in Practice' authorities which means we will support and work alongside other authorities to share best practice and as a result, develop more sustainable high performance across the country.

The settlement also set out the government's intention to protect Adult Social Care by giving us the option to precept 2% which will be ring fenced for this service. This was a welcome area of focus as the Council has, along with other Counties, argued that there has been insufficient funding in this area. Given the demographics of Ryedale and the whole of North Yorkshire, this is a vital area of the service provision.

Finally, if all goes to plan, we still have earmarked a further £3 million to progress fast speed broadband across the county. Many of us in Thornton le Dale already have this service available now, but there are still areas that do not have this increasingly important infrastructure.

Janet Sanderson