

Cllr Felicity Cunliffe-Lister Parish Report

March 2023

Bus Routes : 136, 138, 139, 144, 159 : Ripon Roweller; Masham-Bedale; Richmond - Leyburn - Ripon

These routes were under threat and have been given extra funding to continue operating until April 24. There is a risk that the routes will not survive if they are not found to be economically viable in that time. I will be lobbying for this requirement to be relaxed, and I have asked what the thresholds are that have to be met for viability to be reached. In the meantime, can I urge all residents that might be able to use these routes to use them as often as possible. In addition, if residents would use the buses more if they ran at any particular time please let me know when these times would be.

Unitary Authority

The transfer from North Yorkshire County Council to North Yorkshire Council will take place on 1st April. The administration of all council services will be from County Hall from that point onwards, although some district offices (such as those in Harrogate) will still be used to deliver them. There are provisional arrangements in place for much of this while the structure of the various departments is settled. I am also waiting to hear further on what form the proposed Community Networks are going to take and how members will be appointed.

NYCC Finances

The shortfall in the 23/24 budget is currently £42M. This is taking into account an increase in Council Tax by 4.99% (the maximum permitted without a referendum), an increase in business rates (to be confirmed) and some savings in expenditure. The shortfall is likely to be £30M which can be met from reserves. Going forward, this is not sustainable if the shortfall continues at this level for more than another year or two, so will have to be met in some other way. Although there will be some capital raised from selling buildings, this cannot be used to plug a gap in revenue.

Rural Broadband

I have been in contact with NYNet who have now confirmed which dwellings will be connected to broadband under Phase 4 and which won't. There are a disappointingly high number of rural dwellings in the area that will not get a connection. I have asked for a list of addresses, currently I just have map locations, and how this will be communicated to the occupants.

The advice from NYNet is to apply for a BT voucher, although at £3,400 this is unlikely to be enough to cover the costs of connection, or to apply as a cluster of dwellings under the Gigabit voucher scheme where the voucher value is slightly higher and economies of scale can be made. Whilst the scheme is currently paused, group applications can still be made – there are various providers on the scheme and it is they who apply for the vouchers. Failing this, and this will involve a longer wait as delivery will not be until next year, the central government's Project Gigabit scheme will deliver connection to most remaining addresses.

Energy Support

Attached to my email is a press release from County Hall about the Government's Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF) which is offering a £400 payment for households

which did not receive the original help to pay for the cost of energy, such as those without their own electricity meter or without a direct relationship to an electricity supplier. This includes farmhouses used for domestic purposes, which might be relevant to residents in your Parish. In addition, there is the £200 Alternative Fuel Payment (ATP) for households that do not use mains gas and use an alternative fuel such as oil, biomass and bottled gas – and with so many rural dwellings not having a gas connection I am hoping this will be well received.

Let's Talk

NYCC launched a Let's Talk Climate survey in February with another to follow shortly on Transport. I encourage all residents to complete these, as their feedback and views will inform County's Climate Change and Transport strategies. There is also one aimed specifically at the 16-25 yr age group, covering both Climate and Transport. It's very important that our views on transport and climate are heard, and this is the opportunity for County level strategy to be taking them into consideration. Please let me know if there are any issues with the submission of these surveys as I have heard of there being difficulties with the system.

Youth Councils

I have been in touch with the Youth Voice department at NYCC as I would be keen to support the establishment of Youth Councils in the local area. They would be open for those aged 11-18 to join, and an opportunity for them to have their voice heard at County level, to apply for support and resources and to act as a fund raising body. There is no limit to the size of a community that might want to support a Youth Council, but it is usually the case that two DBS cleared adults support each meeting. This type of representation would really help support the case for the reinstatement of transport to sixth form schools and colleges, and other schemes such as the use of a community bus for activities and sports events. A great idea that has been suggested recently would be the operation of a Homework Club in a Parish Hall, providing a quiet environment for learning and the opportunity for the older children to supervise and assist with the operation of the scheme. Please let me know if this might be of interest and if you would like to become involved.

20 is Plenty

There is a review under way for this proposed scheme. During my election campaign, speeding traffic was a concern raised in all villages. I am hoping that the review's conclusion will be a positive one, and that it allows for villages to apply for a 20mph in particularly affected areas. I will keep you posted.

FCL