

LEADER'S STATEMENT

This is our first full Council meeting of 2020 – and it marks the start of both a new year, and a new decade. I hope we can work together to make this a year of progress and achievement as we deal with a number of key issues. I would like to brief members on some important progress that has been made through the Policy & Resources Committee and its various cross-party working groups.

Public Services Hub

P&R agreed to proceed with the development of a business case for a Public Services Hub. This will involve exploring how we can bring essential public services together into a single, modern, fit-for-purpose facility. We are able to draw down £70k of funding from the Cabinet Office to support this work. Construction work has already begun for the Jobcentre to move into Ryedale House, and tonight we will consider a request for North Yorkshire Police's neighbourhood team to also move in. This represents many months of hard work from our officers and will greatly improve the service we give to the public.

Refugee resettlement

P&R agreed that the council should once again participate in the Government's refugee settlement scheme. The scheme will involve housing 18 people by 2024. There is no direct cost to the council and it is welcomed by our housing team.

Milton Rooms

We have held three meetings of the cross-party working party looking at how the council can best support the Milton Rooms into the future. These have been interesting and positive discussions, involving a number of different contributors. At the next meeting, which takes place later this month, we will hear from trustees of the Milton Rooms Committee. The findings of the working group will be collated and taken to a future meeting of P&R for consideration.

Car parking strategy

We are making significant progress with the cross-party car parking working party, where we are examining the findings of the consultant's report. We have already reviewed district-wide recommendations, and we are now in the process of looking at specific measures for each of the five towns. This is an important issue for the people and businesses of Ryedale, and members are playing a full role in making sure we take the right decisions for the future strategy. It is hoped that the final strategy will be ready for approval by council in June.

Housing

An independent review of our approach to tackling homelessness resulted in the council receiving the highest mark of any council reviewed so far. For the third year running, we have received the top rating for our administration of housing benefit, something no other North Yorkshire local authority has achieved. We have also been successful in attracting additional funding to address fuel poverty in our district. These are all testimony to the commitment of the officers delivering these services, and I would like to record my thanks to the staff for their work.

And finally, I would like to once again express my thanks to members for their contributions to the important work of this council. By working together in a constructive way I am confident that we will be able to make significant achievements by the end of our term.