The future of local government in North Yorkshire – when the current two-tier council system is scrapped - was the focus of our September meeting.

More than 40 members and visitors tuned in to hear representations from the leaders and chief executives of North Yorkshire County Council, Coun Carl Les and Richard Flinton, and their Harrogate Borough Council counterparts, Coun Richard Cooper and Wallace Sampson OBE, both pictured, who put across opposing proposals for the county’s post devolution administration.

Coun Les opened the debate by saying how important Harrogate was to him. Before handing over to Richard Flinton to outline their unitary authority plan, he said how visited regularly, used local businesses and had a resonance with local people.

Mr Flinton said as it currently stands, there are nine councils in North Yorkshire; North Yorkshire County Council, seven district councils, and City of York Council, which is already a unity authority.

Their plan is for York to stay as it is and for the eight others to come together a single, unitary entity, which would deliver savings of at least £25m a year. Eighty-seven per cent of residents polled aligned themselves with the North Yorkshire brand, he added.

A single North Yorkshire Council, which would not be “NYCC Mk 2”, would deliver the strongest possible voice to Government, the north and the region, said Mr Flinton. It will lead to the least disruption, be strong on infrastructure, have a strong response to emergencies and the quickest and surest route to devolution investment.

To replace Harrogate Borough Council, a parish council similar to those operating in Ripon, Knaresborough and Pateley Bridge would manage delegated services such as arts & culture and car parking. In response, Harrogate Borough Leader, Coun Richard Cooper – a big fan of unitary authorities, wanted a council rooted in localism, and one that needs to preserve “place, identity and belonging”.

With the majority of those watching the debate owning or managing businesses in the Harrogate District, he said Harrogate Borough Council had delivered very quickly for businesses during the COVID19 crisis.

Coun Cooper said he and his colleagues in the seven other district councils were looking at two unitary authorities for North Yorkshire, which would include City of York Council. And with a combined population of 826,600, they had looked at both an east/west split or north/south split, with the preferred option being east/west, which is where the Harrogate District would sit.

This, he said, would deliver savings of between £33m and £56m a year. There would be plenty of opportunities for both authorities to collaborate. (cont’d on page 2)
It would draw on existing skills and create efficiencies across services. In particular it would strengthen services to York.

Mr Sampson said the east/west model would be best for service delivery, “It was a sensible scale and would offer more localism and be better for business. It provided balanced populations and balanced economies”.

A unitary authority the size of North Yorkshire would, he added, cause real problems. There are ongoing challenges in relation to transport connectivity, but east and west authorities would work together. Whilst acknowledging some benefits to a north/south split, Harrogate still demanded strong relations with Leeds.

In summary, Mr Sampson said the east/west model would work and work well. It was the best split for the economy, had the best footprint, was a sensible size with services embedded locally.

Efficiency savings would be maximised and there would be clean and inclusive economic growth and support for business. And, importantly, it would make sense to local people.

When asked how could a single North Yorkshire be run from a single hub, Mr Flinton said whilst some services would be centralised, there would be different hubs where the other services would be located.

Coun Cooper added that a single North Yorkshire would be too big, and Mr Sampson added that a unitary authority that size would cause problems.

The question of speed and timing of this decision, particularly in relation to Covid was raised as a concern by one attendee. Another asked how would Harrogate’s floral tradition be protected if there was no Harrogate Borough Council.

Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce members were advised that they still had the opportunity to make their voices heard, but this had to be done before end of September.

It was envisaged that whatever the outcome, the new authorities would begin to take shape from as early as January 2021, with it being fully implemented by March the following year.

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Message from the Chief Executive

• Doesn't it seem a long time since we all met up in at Rudding Park, in March?

Although we haven’t met in person since then, you can be assured both myself and the Management Group have been working behind the scenes to ensure we are keeping Harrogate in the forefront of any discussions within North Yorkshire, and further afield regarding trains and planes, and all things transport related.

Our last meeting was very interesting, hearing from North Yorkshire County Council and Harrogate Borough Council regarding the options for Unitary Devolution was particularly important.

After hearing both sides, I am intrigued to see how discussions move forward and wonder who will be Mayor, or perhaps Mayors, to ensure we are making the best of what extra funds we receive from central Government.

Our next meeting will be a private (Members Only) talk from a Bank of England representative, who will no doubt provide a forecast for the future.

Following on from last month’s newsletter, we have held membership fees at the same rate as last year, with only six months to pay. We’ll soon be emailing out invoices for payment by the end of October. If you have a monthly Direct Debit set up, we will commence monthly collections at the end of October.

I hope you will all retain your membership, and I look forward to meeting you all again face to face perhaps in the New Year.”

Yours

Sandra
Take The Town Centre Survey

News Platform *The Stray Ferret* has launched a survey into the future of Harrogate Town Centre. The question it is posing is “what do you want from Harrogate?”

The survey, which takes no more than ten minutes to complete, can be found here: [https://thestrayferret.co.uk/harrogatesurvey/](https://thestrayferret.co.uk/harrogatesurvey/)

Harrogate Helps Harrogate

Following on from one of our previous meetings, the question was asked how we can help local businesses, which in turn will help the town? In answer, Lottie Kent and Vicky Findlow created Harrogate helps Harrogate.

What Lottie is asking for is whenever you do something to support a local business – be it grabbing a coffee or a beer, enjoying a bite to eat or treating yourself to some new clothes…(and anything else of course) make sure you:

1. Post a pic of you at the business or with your item
2. Tag the business on social
3. Tag a friend to get them involved too

4. And don’t forget to use the #harrogatehelpsharrogate

That way the business will get social media exposure with the likelihood that these recommendations will drive footfall their way.
McCormicks offers employers new helpline for Employment law matters

A new employment law helpline by McCormicks will offer employers advice for a fixed monthly payment, with cost based on the number of employees and wage roll.

Head of Employment Law Iain Jenkins said: “We have a number of services we can offer to employers: these now include a fixed cost helpline for day-to-day HR and employment advice. It means our clients can fix their monthly cost for this work.

“We are also available to deal with those more complex problems where other HR providers may be out of their depth.

“These could include work covering employment and business transactions, restrictive covenants, breach of contract claims, work relating to senior employees, overseas employees etc. This means we are a one-stop shop for all you need.”

The helpline is the latest addition to a variety of services for employers, which includes a software package designed to make HR record-keeping simpler, covering a range of issues such as holidays, working time, expenses, appraisals and policy documents, all available via mobile phone.

In addition, McCormicks can also provide insurance cover for legal costs and awards in the event of a claim in the Employment Tribunal.

To find out more, contact Iain on 01423 530630 or at i.jenkins@mccormicks-solicitor

Business leaders Invited to Chair York & North Yorkshire LEP

The York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Y & NY LEP) has launched a campaign to recruit a new Chair as the term of office for the current Chair, David Kerfoot MBE DL, comes to an end next March.

Speaking of his time as Chair and the search for his successor, David said: “It has been a great pleasure and honour to lead this dynamic partnership and although there have been challenges, it has been a very rewarding role.

As Chair, you are able to make a real difference ‘on the ground’ and I look forward to seeing a new Chair take up the legacy and lead the LEP’s vision to build a greener, fairer and stronger economy for the region as we emerge from the pandemic.

The LEP is looking for a successful business leader who has a knowledge and passion for York and North Yorkshire.

The new Chair will need to provide clear, strong, visible leadership and get out and about and talk to people and businesses across the region about what they need.”

Further information is available and applications can be submitted at: www.ynylepchair.com Applications will close on Friday, October 2.

David Kerfoot MBE DL
Update from Harrogate Convention Centre & the Royal Hall

Harrogate Convention Centre Director Paula Lorimer has written to update members on the continuing role of the Convention Centre, Royal Hall and exhibition halls as a Nightingale Hospital.

You can read the letter in full here:

October meeting

As already stated by Sandra in her message, our next meeting (6pm on Monday, October 5, via Zoom) will be for Chamber Members only.

Please remember to register your attendance here.

In return, we will email you the login details, which we ask are not to be shared.

We will only be allowing those who have pre-registered to attend.

Something to share?

We publish members’ news stories on our website and in our newsletter.

If you have a news story to submit, email details to ceo@harrogatechamber.co.uk with a landscape picture.

Congratulations Harrogate Town

The League Managers Association’s panel, comprising LMA Chairman Howard Wilkinson, Sir Alex Ferguson, Chris Hughton, Joe Royle, Dave Bassett, Barry Fry and Rachel Yankey, has determined that the LMA Performance of the Week Award should go to Harrogate Town for their impressive 4-0 victory against Southend United in their first ever Football League match on September 12, 2020.

The experienced and highly distinguished panel has managed a combined total of over 6,500 competitive matches in professional football.

Harrogate Town manager Simon Weaver will receive a celebratory bottle of champagne, courtesy of Tanners Wines, and an LMA Performance of the Week trophy in a presentation to commemorate the result.

Pictured are Paul Thirlwell, left, and Simon Weaver.