

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18th July 2018

**STATEMENT FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES,
LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES, CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT,
SCRUTINY, AREA COMMITTEES, PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND
LOCALITY BUDGETS**

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DAVID CHANCE

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Go Local

Members will be aware of Go Local – the overarching community transport brand co-created with the community transport sector – from my previous updates to Council. The aim of the brand is to increase the public's awareness, perceptions and usage of community transport – an important element of the transport network, especially in a rural county such as North Yorkshire.

Led by a small steering group of community transport representatives and officers from the Stronger Communities Team, Communications and Integrated Passenger Transport, work has intensified on preparing the brand for launch. The group intend to do a phased launch beginning in early autumn in order to monitor demand and understand impact. It is important that as a County Council we continue doing what we can to support community transport, and I look forward to updating Members on this project later in the year.

Inspire, Achieve, Innovate – One Year On

It has now been one year since the Programme launched its new investment prospectus – Inspire, Achieve, Innovate – to communities at a series of roadshows throughout the county. The Programme wanted to build on experience of its first two years of operation, as well as respond to an LGA target to “achieve even more” after identifying the potential of the Stronger Communities Programme by implementing a new model that would maximise the effectiveness of available resources, develop long term strategic partnerships, deliver needs led investment, and encourage social action.

It has been a pleasure to see how communities and voluntary organisations have embraced this change in approach. 98 Inspire grants have been approved to date. These are awards of up to £1,000 designed to encourage people to get involved with their local community to deliver projects or activities that promote social interaction, neighbourliness cohesion and improve wellbeing. Two-thirds of those awards have been made to support new grass roots social action groups and projects that have not previously had any involvement with the Programme.

The main investment stream – Achieve Together – focuses on longer term, sustainable, needs led projects, delivered in partnership and where possible, at scale. Due to the level of collaboration, planning and development time involved with Achieve Together projects there is a lengthy lead in time between initial proposal and funding award. 8 projects have been approved through this stream to date.

Stronger Communities Evaluation

The Contract for the evaluation of the Stronger Communities Programme closed in June with 9 tenders received. Assessments of the bids are underway and it is expected the Contract will be awarded in August. An evaluation partner will work with the Stronger Communities Programme and its VCSE investment collaborators on a long term and ongoing basis to 2022. The assessment will evaluate the Programme's investment, support and activities against five key questions to help understand its impact and effectiveness towards achieving its ambition and outcomes for the Council and communities across North Yorkshire.

Essential Life Skills Fund

In May this year I updated Members on the Essential Life Skills Fund, an element of the Scarborough Opportunity Area funded by the Department for Education. Stronger Communities were invited to support the Fund because of their knowledge and experience operating grants programmes. The second and final round of applications to the Fund closed at the end of June; 23 applications were received with requests totalling just over £900,000.

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Area Constituency Committees – the first round of meetings of the new committees has been completed and the way in which they will approach their work has been agreed. The next meetings will see the local MPs invited to attend to discuss issues that are relevant to the area and have a strategic importance. Whilst the agendas for those meetings have yet to be firmed up, topics are likely to include: the funding of social care and the green paper; suicide prevention; the expansion of Catterick Garrison; sustainability of rural schools; and key transport routes and infrastructure.

Members should be aware that Northamptonshire County Council Best Value Inspection Report highlighted a number of issues that led to the demise of that Council. These included poor financial control; lack of clarity in reporting; lack of challenge, with people being told what they wanted to hear, and scrutiny arrangements being constrained by Executive. It was found that Members had been actively discouraged from asking questions at audit and scrutiny committees and the Council blindly pursued a strategic vision for the Authority at all costs.

Whilst there is no immediate concern that something similar would happen here, it is good to bear in mind the lessons learnt as this is only one of a number of high profile incidences over the past 10 years where governance has failed in the public sector.

DAVID CHANCE