

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

24TH July 2019STATEMENT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER -
LIBRARY, CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

COUNTY COUNCILLOR GREG WHITE

Library and Information Service**Bookseller Library of the Year – Harrogate**

The Bookseller hosts an annual award to celebrate libraries throughout the UK that support and foster reading with energy and dedication and which are a vital presence in their local communities. To make the shortlist the entrants must demonstrate imaginative ways in which libraries have reached out to users, “the work the best libraries of all sizes do to promote reading, literacy, information and the love of books” how they have made the most of resources, and how individual librarians have contributed to their library’s success. I am proud to announce that Harrogate Library has been chosen as the winner!! Harrogate Library is the busiest in North Yorkshire, hosting a wide range of events and activities from Code Clubs to author events. It has an active cohort of volunteers who assist with all events as well as day-to-day opening.

Deaf Café

The Deaf Café was launched in April 2019 at Harrogate Library, hosted by NYCC sensory workers with refreshments provided by The Deaf Society. This has brought in new library members and helps promote the library as a safe, welcoming venue. In the next few months a member of library staff will attend the group to promote library services.

Fish and Ships Festival

The inclusion of Whitby Library within the FISH & SHIPS Festival came about as a legacy from the working party of Cook 250 last July- invited by Scarborough Council. ‘Fish & Ships’ meetings of different organisations & partners were held to share ideas and promotion prior to festival.

The result was a very successful weekend of events for the library and the Sat 18 May footfall appears to be the highest we’ve recorded at **454**. Sunday had a reach of **169**, giving a weekend total of **623 visitors**. Last year’s figures for the same weekend (Sat only) was 116.

The volunteers were delighted to be part of the project and enjoyed the visit to CRO and proud to have their work on display. They also readily gave extra hours of their time to cover library opening hours.

Skipton Library improvements

Members may remember that Skipton Library was to receive a much-needed improvement in May. I am pleased to report that the official launch took place on 1 July, attended by myself, Chair Cllr Jim Clark and local councillors, library volunteers, partners and customers. The new look ground floor space has been well received

Library IT update

I am pleased to announce that the roll out of the replacement self-serve kiosks is underway. The new kiosks offer a wider range of services including card payments.

Volunteer celebration events

I am pleased to say that the Chair, Cllr Jim Clark, hosted three thank you events for our library volunteers during Volunteers Week in June. These were attended by over 80 volunteers and well received, one attendee said it was the best library meeting he's been to and well worth attending. The events provided the opportunity to present our Library of the Year awards.

NYCC Library of the Year 2018/19

Grassington hub and community library has been named North Yorkshire's library of the year. The community library took the title for its outstanding performance over the last year, in particular the increased visitor numbers, which were reflected in increased use of library services.

Carol Headley, a trustee of the hub, said: "A lot of our success is due to our committed volunteers and we are very proud of what they put into the organisation.

The hub runs a monthly luncheon club and has recently started afternoon tea sessions. Volunteers manage the Helping Hands scheme, which arranges transport for people needing help to attend medical appointments. The hub also acts as a box office for Grassington Festival and other local events and issues parking permits on behalf of the parish council.

Six other libraries were highly commended:

- The Globe, Stokesley;
- Helmsley community library
- Sherburn and villages community library
- Derwent Valley BRIDGE, West Ayton
- Mashamshire community library
- Norton HIVE

The awards were announced by the chair of North Yorkshire County Council, Cllr Jim Clark, during a series of events he attended to celebrate Volunteers Week.

Archives

May was a busy month for the Record Office which took its pop-up archive to venues around the county to celebrate Local History month. These events, held in conjunction with local heritage groups, promote the work of the office, give people the chance to talk to archive professionals and allow them to access a range of historic records relating to their locality. Pop-up archives were held at Thornton Dale, Coxwold, Ripon and Northallerton library and further events are planned for the coming months.

May also saw the Record Office hold its ninth Archives at Dusk evening which, once again, drew a record attendance. 240 people enjoyed an evening of archive entertainment on the theme of law and order. Visitors were taken on a journey through the criminal justice system from medieval punishments and transportation to the development of modern fingerprinting techniques. One regular visitor remarked '9th visit – always amazing! Thank you', while for another it was 'Absolutely fantastic. First time and loved it. Will be back'.

The Record Office has secured a grant of £36,000 from Arts Council England for its Unfolding Origins project. Working in partnership with Chrysalis Arts Development and in collaboration with local and regional artists, an extensive programme of activities will be developed to engage targeted participants including young and elderly people and socially isolated groups and individuals as well as schools, community and heritage groups. Based on archival collections and their wealth of stories and information about place, heritage and local distinctiveness, the project will demonstrate the potential of archives as an inspirational resource and how creative collaboration can help new audiences to understand and interpret their heritage.

Customer

Numbers continue to grow for the customer portal with now over 40k registered accounts which equates to 15% of the households in North Yorkshire and nearly 3k transactions now completed online each month. Services within the portal continue to grow with Blue Badge consistently over 90% which is higher than the national average and significant growth in June for both Older Persons bus pass and disabled bus pass achieved by growing skills in the telephone service explaining the benefits of the customer portal to customers. The team continue to refine our offerings to those who cannot go online with continued development with the libraries and the telephone service. A recent change in our blue badge telephone offering allows those customers who cannot go online to post the relevant documents to the Blue Badge team and then NYCC call back the customer to complete the process, this has reduced the amount of incomplete applications within the team, however, due to the process the team cannot reduce the 6 week wait via the telephone channel compared to 2 week online service. Within the telephone service, average speed of answer is consistent at 80 seconds across the service with a slightly reduced number of calls coming into the service. There has been an increase in the length of telephone transactions by 80 seconds on average which evidences an

increase in complexity on the telephone service, a change that was expected as simple quicker transactions move on-line and the telephone service is left with supporting customers with a higher proportion of complex issues.