

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL24th July 2019**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****Stronger Communities Programme Evaluation**

I informed Members last year of the successful procurement, and commencement of, a long term independent evaluation of the Stronger Communities Programme and its investment strategy. Taking place over four years and measured against five key evaluation questions, the evaluators will be advising and informing the Programme about how best resources and investment can be deployed, to ensure the maximum impact and benefit for communities in North Yorkshire.

The first year of the evaluation has now concluded and to help develop the first report the evaluators have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including grant recipients, the wider voluntary sector, key internal commissioners and specialist support providers. I look forward to reviewing the report and I will continue to keep Members updated as this progresses.

Strong and Steady Update

Members will be aware of Strong and Steady, the countywide physical activity service for older people. The Programme is now half way through its life and I am pleased to say that in excess of 400 individuals have been supported through the more intensive targeted sessions which are tailored to individual needs. Many of these individuals have 'stepped down' into universal sessions which provide a structured community led opportunity for social interaction through age and ability appropriate physical activity and sport.

North Yorkshire Connect

Developed in-house, North Yorkshire Connect is the new community directory for North Yorkshire. First launched in 2017, the directory is the central repository for all community events, activities and services in North Yorkshire, aiming to improve the access to, and standard of, information available. Since its launch, the Council has received a lot of feedback from organisations advertising on the site and the public using the site. As a result, a new website was launched in February this year that contained a number of improvements including updates to the search function and data importing. A marketing and engagement campaign is now underway until September to encourage more groups to upload their information onto the site, and to increase the usage of the site among the public. I would encourage Members to

advertise the directory to any community groups in their ward who may wish to register.

Celebrating Sleights – Connected Communities

Connected Communities is a joint project between the Council's Technology and Change, and Stronger Communities Teams. Taking place in Sleights the project uses technology to develop local community infrastructure and support the local community to become better connected. While tackling access, loneliness and social isolation is an important part of the project, it's also about understanding how technology can improve local life and connect people more with their local community.

In June, I attended a celebration event held in Sleights bringing the community together and recognising the positive steps that have been made to date. Despite the torrential rain, many residents attended the event and took part in the activities on offer. The Council were invited to deliver a presentation on Connected Communities at the National Housing Conference in Manchester. The presentation went down well with those delegates attending, with many interested to understand the community led drive underpinning the technology. This is an exciting project that serves as a pilot area to understand what works to better understand how it might be rolled out to other areas in the future.

Surrey County Council Summit

The Stronger Communities Programme were invited to attend a summit hosted by Surrey County Council who were seeking input into the design of their own community engagement programme. Information shared with Surrey also attracted the interest of Cornwall Council and has now been passed to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to feed into the development of a National Communities Framework.

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Overview and scrutiny – New central government guidance on the operation of overview and scrutiny in local authorities was published on 7 May 2019. It is a useful restatement of the key role that scrutiny has to play as a check and balance and in good governance. Scrutiny Board has reviewed the guidance and I am pleased to say that the Council's scrutiny function performs well when judged against the criteria set out in the document.

School Admission Appeals – The appeals team in Democratic Services have been working hard during the bulk admissions appeal season, April to August, to ensure that parents and carers are able to exercise their right to appeal a school admission decision. This important service is dependent upon the hard work, commitment and dedication of a small number of volunteer panel members who provide an independent decision at the appeals panel.

Area Constituency Committees – The committees have now been in place for 1 year. Over the course of this first year, they have: developed a work programme that reflects the key strategic issues in their areas; built a working relationship with their MPs; and linked in and coordinated their efforts with scrutiny. In this second year of

the committees, we will work with the Police and other key stakeholders to develop data, information and analysis on community safety and resilience that enables the committees to gain a deeper understanding of their area.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LOCALITY BUDGETS

With effect from 01 July 2019, Members are able to submit recommendations for projects using their Environmental Locality Budget (ELB).

All recommendations for Locality Budgets (LB) and ELB need to be made using the current LB online form (Flexi-Grant).

The intention is that Members should use the £5,000 ELB budget for environmental projects, including work on the Highway and Public Rights of Way, and the £5,000 LB budget more widely, but as previously, the budgets are flexible.

If the work is to be undertaken by NYCC Highways – the minimum award is £1,000. The work to be undertaken and the cost MUST be agreed with the Highways Area Office before completing the online form.

If the work is to be undertaken by an external organisation – the minimum award is £300 and the maximum total funding for a project or activity in a financial year is £5,000. Funding cannot be awarded to private businesses or individuals.

The final date for the submission of recommendations is 31 January 2020.

DAVID CHANCE