

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13th November 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 independent evaluators have just released the first year draft evaluation report covering the period 1 Apr 2018 – 31 Mar 2019, with the overall assessment being that the Programme is effective given its size and remit and delivers valued support to the VCSE sector. For those organisations and communities that are supported directly by the team, the outcomes are likely to be deep and longer-lasting, and there is emerging evidence that the Programme is successfully creating the conditions for social action in North Yorkshire.

The evaluators recommend the Programme outlines, through a revised strategy, a long term vision for social action and community wellbeing that ties into the Corporate Priorities, Directorate ambitions, and the evolving place based agenda. Work on this strategy is underway, drawing on the three themes of ‘people, place and power’ with a particular focus on the 11 Lower Super Output Areas in the County that are among the lowest performing areas in England.

School Readiness Pilot

Stronger Communities is part of the School Readiness Pilot, supporting the development of ‘Ready Communities’, an element of the project. This Pilot will inform the wider Public Health and CYPS Childhood Futures Transformation Programme. A competitive grant process is being set-up to select community organisations who will help to coordinate and develop community provision across the pilot areas of: East Whitby, and the main Ryedale urban centres.

Approved Provider List Re-Procurement

The Programme has in place an Approved Provider List of external consultants to support voluntary and community groups across 12 specialist domains that go beyond the expertise and resources available from the Programme. This in-depth, independent support has been vital to ensure that those key voluntary and community groups, supporting the Council's outcomes, have an effective and sustainable platform from which to flourish. This support has on occasion been vital in helping to rescue key organisations from failure at a time of crisis that would otherwise have left a significant gap in the local community asset base. Last year 19 voluntary organisations benefitted from this support which has both helped them to 'survive' and 'thrive' and in some notable instances the support provided has been critical in helping them secure significant external funding. The Programme is currently going through a procurement process to ensure an alternate arrangement is in place when the Approved Provider List expires early next year.

Social Norms Campaign

I have mentioned before in my statements about the commitment and dedication of individuals and communities to help one another and add to the richness of local life. It is one of the great strengths of North Yorkshire. Helping others, however, not only benefits the other person, but it can also be beneficial to our own mental and physical wellbeing. Stronger Communities, in partnership with the Council's Communications team, are sponsoring a social norms campaign to build on the kindness and neighbourliness already abundant in our communities. This 12-month campaign will highlight acts of kindness in order to inspire others, understand and remove barriers to helping others, and to raise awareness of the help and support available for people who are lonely, vulnerable and isolated.

I would encourage all Members to embrace and support this campaign when it launches later in the year, and continue to lead by example in your communities.

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Overview and Scrutiny – the Council's five thematic overview and scrutiny committees take on an increasingly complex and challenging workload as they become more involved in pre-decision scrutiny of changes to the way in which Council, NHS and other services are commissioned and delivered. I am keen to ensure that members are fully supported in their work, able to fulfil their role in policy development and act as an important check and balance.

Area Constituency Committees - the Council's six Area Constituency Committees are taking on more of a scrutiny-like approach to their work and stronger links with the overview and scrutiny committees are being developed, particularly in matters relating to changes to local NHS services, the county's road network and transport

infrastructure. I will be working with Scrutiny Board, made up of the five chairs of the overview and scrutiny committees, to see whether more joint meetings can be held with the Area Constituency Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs to help better manage the work programme across the two functions.

Democratic Services – in the build up to the May 2021 Council elections, democratic services will be developing a programme of work aimed at increasing public participation in local democracy. This will include: highlighting the work of the Council and the roles and responsibilities of Councillors; outlining how people can become involved in the Council; encouraging people to register to vote and then actually vote in Council elections; and making people aware of what they need to do to stand in a council election (County, District, Town or Parish).

School Admissions Appeals – during the 2019 bulk appeals season (April to August) the school admissions appeals team in Democratic Services administered 735 appeals by parents and carers against the school place that their child had been allocated. The appeals team: supports 30 plus independent, volunteer panel members; provides support and technical guidance to parents, carers and schools; and ensures good governance and proper procedures followed prior to the hearing and on the day of the hearing. The team also administers Exclusion Appeals and Home to School Transport Appeals. Albeit starting from a low base, there have been in-year increases in appeals against exclusions from school and also increases in home to school transport appeals.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LOCALITY BUDGETS

The Locality Budget scheme rules state that no recommendations or decisions can be processed during a pre-election period (county, district and parliamentary elections). This means that, because of the general election on 12th December 2019, no recommendations from County Councillors can now be considered until Monday 16th December 2019.

DAVID CHANCE