

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2020**

**STATEMENT OF CLLR GREG WHITE**

**Library and Information Service**

**Library Strategy 2020 – 30**

After a decade of great change for libraries in North Yorkshire, residents are being invited to have their say on the way forward for the next ten years.

The new strategy recognises the changes of the past decade and has been developed together with partners, volunteers and other stakeholders. It demonstrates the council's commitment to continue investing in libraries as a community resource able to support its ambitions for North Yorkshire.

We have a family of libraries in North Yorkshire that includes volunteers, charities, partner organisations, parish and town councils, all of whom are involved in delivering services. We recognise the huge contribution in time, energy, commitment and fund raising efforts of community library groups which together with the staffing, infrastructure and financial support from the County Council is critical in keeping all our libraries open.

The strategy shows how working together the service as a whole can develop and remain relevant to the communities served by our libraries. It focuses on four core objectives: literacy and learning; health and wellbeing; digital and communities. These are set against key outcomes of raising aspirations, stimulating enjoyment of culture and helping people live independent lives.

The draft strategy acknowledges that without the support of over 2,000 volunteers and others the service as exists today would not be possible. Its aim is to provide an ambition for libraries rather than revisit the delivery model.

The consultation will be open for six weeks, with results being discussed at the full council meeting in May. People can take part online before Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February.

**Buzzy Bees**

North Yorkshire Libraries are abuzz with an exciting new initiative for under-fives. From March, preschool children are invited to zoom along to their local branch with parents and carers to join 'Buzzy Bee's Honey Hunt'.

To be launched in March, Buzzy Bee's Honey Hunt is a free scheme which rewards young children who borrow books from the library with cards, stickers and a certificate. A set of colourful cards designed by local artist Wendi New, depicting locations across North Yorkshire, will be given to each child as they progress through the scheme. The cards are designed to encourage discussion about the pictures and feature popular songs and rhymes to share.

Enjoyment of books is a key factor in nurturing children's development and preparing them for school. Buzzy Bee's Honey Hunt offers a happy, vibrant and stimulating journey around the county, which will add value and entertainment to library visits for young children and their families.

**Reading Well**

Libraries across North Yorkshire are offering a new collection of books designed to support children with their mental health and wellbeing.

Libraries Connected and the Reading Agency with funding from Arts Council England have developed the new Reading Well for Children scheme, which is aimed at primary school children. The books have been chosen in collaboration with health partners, children and their families and aim to provide advice and support for coping with feelings and worries, daily life and getting through tough times. As with the existing Reading Well schemes, health professionals will be able to recommend titles on the list to families. All the books can be requested free of charge at any North Yorkshire library and are free to borrow.

North Yorkshire libraries have embraced the Reading Well books on prescription scheme for some years, already focusing on mental health, dementia and issues facing young people. This latest collection adds another strand to the support that people can find at their library, again showcasing libraries' important role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve.

### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

A webcast with a concentration camp survivor and commemorative displays are among the ways libraries across North Yorkshire marked Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January.

In the run up to the day, Pickering library showcased a webcast on 24 January, organised by the Holocaust Educational Trust, by concentration camp survivor Susan Pollack MBE. Other libraries featured displays of posters, educational materials, leaflets and books

### **Read2dogs**

Two lovable Labradors are lending their ears to young readers.

Selby library has launched Read2Dogs sessions to help children improve their confidence as readers by sharing books with Dora and Morgan, two Pets as Therapy dogs that visit the library with their owners, Rachael and Tony Wilson, of Selby.

Read2Dogs has been shown to help children develop literacy skills and confidence, through the calming effect of the dog's presence on children and because the dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud.

Sessions take place on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month. People can book 15-minute slots, which are open to children of any age and adults with learning difficulties.

### **Registrars**

As I indicated in November, opposite sex civil partnerships were introduced on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019 with the first signing being on the 31<sup>st</sup> December. Most couples are opting for the cheap simple signing at £46 excluding the cost of the certificate.

Demand has exceeded slightly exceeded expectations, even if still comparatively low in numbers. 14 ceremonies have already been held (up to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020), and there are a further 40 ceremonies booked between 1<sup>st</sup> February and the end of December 2020. Demand is expected to decrease after this initial first rush

The next change expected is that there will be a conversion routine whereby opposite sex couples who are married can convert their marriage to a civil partnership. Exact details are not yet known.

We also await further announcements on changes to marriage law but no date is set for when these changes will be announced.

## Archives

The Record Office is working on a major new campaign with the Communications team. Titled 'Made in North Yorkshire', the first series of stories will look at Great North Yorkshire Sons and Daughters and will focus on people from history who were born in the county or who came here, made a difference and made North Yorkshire what it is today. Working with local heritage groups across the county, the campaign will tell the stories of people who made a difference in their local communities and who embody the values of North Yorkshire and its shared heritage. The campaign will run for ten months on the website and social media, at the end of which the public will be invited to vote for the person whom they believe most clearly represents the values and character of the county.

## Customer update

We launched a new customer 'contact us' form on the website in November. In the last 60 days over 8000 customers have accessed this service with only 700 e-mails being received in the Customer Service Centre from the form.

The 'contact us' form is designed to help Customers find their way to the right service - re-directing them to information relevant to their query. Early indications from the data show that contact us is successfully helping customers find information without having to make contact with us.

Using data we are continually amending the process to make further improvements for our customers

In December we launched "request to refill a grit bin" on-line for both customers and parish. Usage is low because we have not yet had a weather event so far this year. Older person bus pass and blue badge still reporting over 90% on-line. Overall digital demand for services in the portal is running at 88%.

## Members' IT

Last year the whole council was affected by our emails becoming blocked when sent to both customers and partners, which created serious operational challenges. This problem was created through a phishing attack, where a user entered their user name and password into a malicious site.

While we attempt to cover all eventualities from a technical level and also from a training perspective, we cannot legislate for all activity. In light of this, we have implemented a new security measure when accessing NYCC webmail.

The new, more secure access method will include the use of two factor authentication, similar to the system some banks use online, so in addition to entering User-ID and Password, a One Time Passcode (OTP) will also be required each time a user logs on. This new security system was implemented on **4 February**.

Staff from T&C are onsite today to help with any IT issues.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR GREG WHITE