

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 February 2022

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

Covid19 Pandemic Response and Recovery

The network of 23 Community Support Organisations (CSOs), working in conjunction with their volunteers, partners and networks, continue to provide support to our most vulnerable residents where required.

Despite high levels of Covid-19 infection in December and January, immediate support requests for shopping and prescriptions have continued to steadily decrease. The CSOs have, however, maintained and further developed their transitional activity, in order to build the confidence and independence of those who have been shielding and/or self-isolating throughout the pandemic, and to support them to re-engage in their communities. This has included social events, support sessions, walking groups, supported shopping trips and exercise classes.

The CSOs have also provided a significant level of support to the vaccination programme, which increased considerably in late 2021 with the booster roll out. A total of 6,300 volunteer hours were recorded between October and December compared to 2,216 hours in the previous three months. In total, the CSO infrastructure since it was mobilised in March 2020 has undertaken an extraordinary 195,706 hours of volunteering.

Funding has been secured for the continuation of CSOs until at least March 2023. It is anticipated that this will be a transitional and evolutionary year, as we continue to recover from the pandemic. This will factor in the potential development of Community Anchor Organisations (CAOs) and the role they can play in supporting their communities, as well as the on-going conversations that are taking place across the health and social care system about the potential role of CSOs in the future.

Covid19 Related Work

Covid19 Community Grants Programme

The Stronger Communities Covid19 Community Grants Programme remains in place to support communities as they continue to respond to and recover from the pandemic, whilst adapting their activities accordingly.

£25,985 in the form of 32 small grants has been allocated to 30 community groups and/or projects in the last quarter that encourage the re-opening of activities and services that aim to support communities to re-build their levels of confidence and independence.

Sustainable Food Support

In addition to the awards made through the Food for the Future Programme, which aims to embed local sustainable food options whilst supporting beneficiaries to build their levels of independence and confidence, an additional 14 grants were awarded to food banks and / or

organisations that supply food to those in need last quarter. This was facilitated through the Household Support Fund to provide additional capacity over the winter period.

In order to better understand the food insecurity landscape in the region, Stronger Communities are currently scoping a joint piece of insight work with City of York Council. Initial discussions on this with Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and Hartlepower (a Hartlepool based organisation currently developing and delivering a similar piece of research) have taken place and further work will commence shortly.

Digital Inclusion

Work on Reboot North Yorkshire continues to progress with a particular focus on enlisting the support of our local communities and voluntary sector groups as Community Partners to allow a network of community Reboot projects to grow and develop across the county. Working with internal colleagues and external partners, 415 devices have been gifted to socially isolated individuals to date, with an additional 200 devices distributed to school children.

Reboot North Yorkshire continues to work closely with Citizens Online and their Digital Champion Coordinator for North Yorkshire, who is in post until March 2022.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Stronger Communities continue to lead on the delivery of this programme, which was launched with the branding of FEAST (Food, Entertainment, Arts & Sport Together) in partnership with Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) and the voluntary and community sector. Coordination of the programme is being undertaken by North Yorkshire Together who, in conjunction with a network of locally placed clubs and community organisations, deliver a range of enriching activities over holiday periods. This is alongside a host of online resources being made available for families to enjoy. In December, the Department of Education confirmed funding for the continuation of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme (FEAST) until March 2025.

Wider Stronger Communities Programme Work

Although pandemic related response and recovery work continues to be a priority for the Stronger Communities Team, there are a number of other key work areas that are also currently being delivered.

Children and Young People

The Stronger Communities programme, in conjunction with Children and Young People Service (CYPS), continue to lead and coordinate the school readiness pilot 'Grow and Learn' in Ryedale and Scarborough, with 12 small scale grants awarded last quarter.

The team also continues to work with the Early Help team from CYPS to develop and deliver a project that seeks to grow community capacity by working alongside and with our communities to stimulate, support and develop activities that enable children, young people and their families to be happy, healthy and achieving. Last quarter, Stronger Communities supported the launch of CYPS' Get Going Grant, seeking expressions of interest from community-based groups to deliver activities for young people, or families with young children.

Health and Wellbeing

Stronger Communities continues to strengthen its relationships with NHS partners and has administered a range of NHS mental health grants for the last two years, including grass

roots suicide prevention, a self-harm co-design project and postvention support. The Suicide Prevention Grants Programmes for the Humber, Coast and Vale Integrated Health Care System, and Harrogate and Craven were launched by the team last year, with 68 applications received in late 2021.

Stronger Communities also continues to develop strong working relationships with social care colleagues, with sustained involvement in the Health and Adult Services (HAS) Transformation Programme.

North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF)

The North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) has received 5,346 applications to the Scheme since April 2021. 4,714 of these applications were approved (88%).

Grant spend has amounted to £712,907. 66% of this expenditure was spent on standard provision (for example white goods, furniture and other household items) whilst 34% of provision was spent on emergency food and utilities vouchers. This year to date the awards have included:

- 3,899 food vouchers
- 2,610 energy vouchers
- 712 furniture items
- 687 white good items
- 546 household items
- 179 clothing vouchers.

Compared to the previous year, NYLAF has seen the biggest increase in food vouchers supplied (+1,457) followed by energy vouchers (+211), furniture items (+162) and clothing vouchers (+76).

Individuals supported by NYLAF include carers, those fleeing domestic abuse and many more. However, the most frequently supported vulnerability groups through NYLAF are those identified as having a mental health issue (915), a family under exceptional pressure (715) or homeless (652).

The Rainbow Centre in Scarborough is also contracted to supply food parcels on behalf of NYLAF the Fund. This year the Rainbow Centre has provided over 1,150 additional food parcels.

Covid Grant Scheme (CGS)

The Covid Grant Scheme was set up in April 2020 as a way of addressing emergency food and utility support needs for individuals and households isolating or shielding across North Yorkshire during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This financial year, 2021/22, the Scheme has received 311 applications, and has approved 298 of these (96%). Since April 2021, the grant spend has totalled £33,175.00 on this provision across North Yorkshire.

Two key vulnerable groups supported through this Scheme, are individuals suffering from a 'long term health condition' (120) and individuals with 'no entitlement to sick pay' (109).

Household Support Fund

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded Household Support Fund aims to assist households who may need support with food, energy and essential living costs whilst

the economy recovers from the pandemic. NYCC was allocated £3.54 million to provide support over the winter period (from October 2021 to March 2022) and this is being utilised in four areas of provision in North Yorkshire:

- E-Voucher Direct Award – a total investment of £2.68million to make a £275 shopping voucher available to all households (over 9,000 in total) in receipt of Council Tax Relief (CTR) with a child under 19
- Food Banks Winter Support Fund – an investment of £145,000 to increase the capacity of food supply to those in need
- Warm and Well – an additional £220,000 for Warm and Well to provide energy top up vouchers / direct supplier payments to those in need
- North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) – increasing the NYLAF budget by £250,000 in order to support an increased number of applications for support with food and utilities until the end of March 2022, including temporarily increasing the maximum number of awards per household in a 12 month period from two to four.

Interim monitoring undertaken in January 2022 showed that 12,083 households have benefitted from the various support strands of the Household Support Fund so far.

Legal and Democratic Services

A total of 204 remote access, live broadcast meetings of the Council's committees were held from 19 May 2020 to 27 January 2022. The benefits associated with holding remote access, live broadcast meetings have previously been highlighted. The hope is that Government will enable the necessary Parliamentary time for legislation to be put in place to enable local authorities in England to be able to decide for themselves how best to hold their meetings.

The Council's committees have all been focussed upon ensuring that any outstanding pieces of work are completed ahead of the May 2022 elections and that there is a robust committee work programme that can be handed on.

The pre-election period is expected to start around the week commencing 21 March 2022. As such, Democratic Services are working with members and officers to ensure that they are fully aware of national and local pre-election guidance.

Modern Gov is the committee management system that we have had in place since January 2021. All committee papers are published and circulated through this system and a number of functions like the self-service Register of Interests have recently been rolled out. One of these is an 'App' that automatically downloads committee papers that you have subscribed to and then has a wide range of annotation tools that allow you to mark-up documents as easily as though they were on paper.

The Democratic Services team is working more closely with colleagues in the district and borough councils as part of the development and implementation of a new unitary authority for the county. The focus is upon committee structures, the role and position of overview and scrutiny, member support and training, elections and the development of a new service that covers all aspects of the work done by democratic services across the 8 local authorities.

County Councillor Locality Budgets

The seventh year of the scheme started on 17 May 2021 and the last date for the receipt of recommendations was 31 January 2022. County Councillors were encouraged to focus on projects or activities that responded to local needs and community initiatives; particularly this

year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of climate change, and/or projects that promote the Council's Stronger Communities programme.

A total of 523 recommendations were submitted, amounting to £690,376 (95.89%) of this year's budget. A report on the expenditure and operation of Locality Budgets in the 2021/22 financial year will be presented to Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2022.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DAVID A CHANCE