

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 May 2022

THIS STATEMENT COVERS THE PERIOD FROM THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2022 TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS ON 5 MAY 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) in conjunction with their volunteers, partners and networks continue to provide some support to our most vulnerable residents where required. As infection levels reduce and the majority of restrictions have been lifted their focus is now on recovery and supporting people to regain their independence. Stronger Communities are continuing to work alongside the CSOs over the coming months to identify elements of the model that could be retained and developed to support the wider well-being and prevention agenda.

The investment that has been secured for the development of the model during 2022/23 which will be a transitional and evolutionary year, as we continue to recover from the pandemic. Work is commencing on investigating 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 – January – March 2022

The Stronger Communities Covid19 Community Grants Programme remains in place to support communities as they start to recover from the pandemic. £21,178 in the form of 32 small grants has been allocated to 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

Work has commenced on the insight work with City of York Council to better understand the food and fuel insecurity landscape in the region. The work will evaluate the range of support services that were established during the pandemic and explore potential opportunities for future service provision.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

The Easter School holidays saw the delivery of a programme of holiday activities across the county provided by a growing network of between 40 and 50 sports and arts clubs. The clubs offer free provision for children who are eligible for means tested free school meals and provide a range of enriching activities and a meal. Planning is underway for the summer holidays where activities will be provided for a minimum of 4 weeks. The partnership continues to grow and work is underway to broaden the range of provision – particularly for secondary aged young people.

Stronger Communities Programme Work

The Stronger Communities team are also leading on a number of county wide programmes that have developed over the last quarter of 2021/22.

Community Mental Health Transformation

Stronger Communities are working in partnership with the NHS to transform mental health services for people with a serious mental illness through building capacity within communities and the voluntary sector. The approach includes financial investment, managed by Stronger Communities, for four place based multi-agency partnerships to both pilot new community based services and projects and also to provide small grants to grass roots community groups with the over-arching aim of enabling people with a serious mental illness to live well in their communities. This is part of a national strategy for the transformation of community mental health.

Household Support Fund

Officers from across the Council are managing the programme for the distribution of the Household Support Grant. This is a temporary Department for Work and Pensions funded programme that provides financial support for over 22,000 low income households across the county. This is the second six month programme, totalling £3.5m. Previously at least half of the funding had to be allocated to families with children; now at least one third must be allocated to families with children and at least one third to pensioners. In addition to direct awards, the grant will also be used to provide additional funding for the 'Warm and Well' service, food providers and the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund. The programme is being delivered in partnership with the 7 District Councils.

NYLAF (North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund)

NYLAF made around 7,000 awards in the last financial year. Two thirds of which were urgent help with food and utilities, with the remainder help with white goods, furniture and other household items). The number of awards and the expenditure are higher than in previous years, reflecting the pressures on many households. People supported by NYLAF include carers, those fleeing domestic abuse and many more. The most frequently supported are those identified as having a mental health issue, a family under exceptional pressure or homeless.

Homes for Ukraine

Officers from across the council are leading on the development of the local programme of support for the Homes for Ukraine system

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and UK Resettlement Scheme

North Yorkshire County Council in partnership with district councils has now permanently resettled 122 persons (25 families) under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and will be resettling a final family in May 2022. North Yorkshire will then have met its commitment of resettling its 'fair share' of the national total of Afghan ARAP arrivals based upon our population size.

The County Council in partnership with a range of agencies continues to provide support to the Afghan refugee families temporarily residing in two bridging accommodation hotels in North Yorkshire. There have now been over 500 arrivals since both hotels were first used for the scheme. The pace of moving families out of the hotels into permanent accommodation remains relatively slow and nationally there are about 10,000 Afghans in bridging accommodation.

In line with the commitment made by the County Council and district councils in 2019, refugees under the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) – the more general global refugee scheme - continue to be resettled in the county. Syrian refugees remain the main nationality coming through the scheme. To date 89 UKRS persons have been resettled and planning is underway for new families to arrive in June or July. The target is to have resettled 200 UKRS persons by March 2024. The pace of resettlement has now picked up after a delayed start due to the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 resulting in no arrivals.

All of the refugees resettled in the county under the old 'legacy' schemes of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme have either ended their five year support period or are in their fifth year. The retention rate of those families staying in the county is in the region of 90%.

The programme of English language classes for the adults on both the Afghan and UKRS refugee settlement schemes is currently in a transition phase as we begin to move back into the classroom environment after providing mostly online sessions for the past two years due to the constraints of the pandemic. Learning hours are being expanded as we move to offer a blended approach, providing learners with the opportunity of attending both Face to Face and online classes.

Progress in getting the Afghan and UKRS adults into employment continues. Jobs range from professional to semi or low-skilled. Local employers have continued to express interest in supporting the new Afghan families and this has created a positive effect for earlier refugee arrivals in the county. There have also been more enquiries relating to Ukrainian migrants and these are being logged for future discussions. The issues for the current arrivals to date in getting into employment continue to be the skills match and, for many of the UKRS refugees, their levels of English. However work is being done with local employers to try and overcome these barriers.

Asylum seeker dispersal

On 13 April 2022, the Home Office announced that all local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales will be expected to be asylum dispersal areas. In the coming weeks the Home Office will be undertaking an informal consultation with local authorities to propose how asylum dispersal will work in detail within 12 regions and nations, with each area set to agree a regional plan. Local authorities will not be expected to accommodate asylum

seekers beyond 0.5% of their total population. The consultation will also consider how other existing accommodation pressures such as the response to the situation in Ukraine and the Afghan crisis are impacting local authorities. The former RAF site in Linton-on-Ouse will be used as an asylum seeker accommodation and processing centre.

Legal and Democratic Services

The bulk appeals season for school admissions to primary and secondary schools has commenced and will run through to the end of July 2022. This is the third year in which these appeals have been held remotely. The current Government Regulations enabling this are due to expire in September 2022, although a review of the School Admission Appeals Code by the Department for Education may lead to a more flexible approach to how appeals are heard in the long term.

Over 230 remote access, live broadcast meetings of the Council's committees have been held since 19 May 2020. The continued use of remote access meetings will be considered at the Annual General Meeting of the County Council on 18 May 2022. It remains unclear whether local authorities in England will be given the power to determine for themselves how they hold their meetings.

From the 19 May 2020 to 31 March 2022, there were 228 live broadcast and recorded meetings of the Council's committees using MS Teams and OBS software. There was a total of 14,873 views of the meetings on the Council's YouTube site. This then means an average viewing number per meeting of 65. The highest number of views was for the meeting of the Police Fire and Crime Panel on 14 October 2021 (1,721) and the least number of views was the meeting of the Thirsk and Malton Area Constituency Committee on 3 December 2021 (6).

Representatives from Legal and Democratic Services worked closely with colleagues in the District and Borough Councils to plan and deliver the County Council elections on 5 May 2022. At present, all County Council elections are managed by the district and borough councils on our behalf.

Representatives from Legal and Democratic Services have also worked closely with the District and Borough Councils Legal and Democratic Teams to lead the Governance Workstream for Local Government Reorganisation. This Workstream is looking at the constitutional, legal, policy and governance issues that need to be addressed prior to Vesting Date for the new Unitary Council.

County Councillor Locality Budgets

This year, Members will be able to make recommendations from Monday 13 June 2022, with the closing date for recommendations being 31 January 2023. A full briefing will be provided at the Members Seminar on 8 June 2022.

A report on the operation of Locality Budgets in 2021/22 will be presented to the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 June 2022.

DAVID CHANCE