

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**16 NOVEMBER 2022**

**STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO  
CLIMATE CHANGE & WORKING IN LOCALITIES\***

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR GREG WHITE**

\*Including Stronger Communities, Area Constituency Committees, Broadband & Mobile Telephony (acting as the Councils Digital Champion), Working with Parish & Town Councils, Libraries and other Face to Face Contact Points (Records, Registrars and Coroners)

**Climate Change**

This quarter has seen a great deal of progress for North Yorkshire County Council towards the challenges of climate change, both strategically and 'on the ground.'

In July, the Local Enterprise Partnership Board approved the York and North Yorkshire Routemap to Carbon Negative. This provides a clear, co-owned and evidenced based plan to achieve net zero for the region by 2034 and carbon negative by 2040: This ambition being outlined in the York and North Yorkshire Devolution Deal. North Yorkshire County Council was one of many partners that contributed to the development of the Routemap.

Also in July we declared a Climate Emergency, recognising that we all need to make significant changes to tackle the causes and impacts of climate change. We have started preparing a Climate Change Strategy for the new North Yorkshire Council to articulate how we will play our part.

Throughout this quarter we have continued to bid to Government for capital and revenue projects to make a difference 'on the ground.' This includes bids to the Levelling Up Fund which focusses on improving access to rail travel, the Shared Prosperity Fund, which, amongst other things, will support our community based climate change actions and the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund to pilot innovative ways to install rural EV Charging Points. We also successfully applied for the Community Energy Pathfinder programme, jointly with City of York.

We have extended the YorBus Demand Responsive Transport Pilot Scheme extended for 12 months

To support both climate change and health and wellbeing in a period of escalating energy prices we have launched the North Yorkshire Home Energy Efficiency Fund – to support residents to upgrade their insulation and low carbon heating in a number of District areas. This resulted from an £8 million bid to Government funding led by our Public Health team.

## **Stronger Communities**

### **Community Support - Covid19 Recovery**

Stronger Communities will continue to work with the network of 23 Community Support Organisations until March 2023, to evolve the local community support offer developed as part of the placed based response to the covid pandemic. Following the well-attended 'Response to Recovery' event that took place in May 2022, a 'Learning and Co-Creation' day will take place in early November to continue those collective, developmental discussions; further exploring the role that place based organisations can play in building resilience in communities.

Although Covid response has now been scaled back as individuals and communities focus on recovery activities, it is acknowledged that as we move in to winter, there will be broader community resilience challenges such as cost of living and winter pressures. CSOs will therefore continue to work in partnership with NYCC to act as a place based single point of contact for locally based support, in collaboration with their volunteers, partners and networks.

### **Community Support Related Work**

#### **Community Grants Programme – July – September 2022**

The Stronger Communities Covid19 Community Grants Programme remains in place to support communities as they continue their recovery journey from the pandemic. In Quarter 2, £35,341 in the form of 23 small grants has been allocated to community groups and / or projects that encourage the delivery of activities and services that support communities to re-build their levels of confidence and independence.

### **Sustainable Food Support**

Work continues on the collaborative 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. Initial findings are anticipated in December.

### **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme**

Stronger Communities continue to lead on the delivery of this programme (now in place until March 2025), in partnership with Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) and the voluntary and community sector.

Over summer, over 5000 eligible children attended activities provided by 67 different clubs across the county. The provision offered the option to utilise NYCC's school transport taxis; this meant that a significant number of children were able to access activities who otherwise would not have been able to do so. In addition to places for children and young people who meet the eligibility criteria, there was a successful take up of the discretionary 15% for those who don't meet the threshold, but who would benefit from free places. Alongside those accessing free places a further 6800 children attended as paid for places; which meant that across the County children and young people were able to enjoy activities over summer with their friendship groups.

Children & Young People's Services have now successfully recruited to their Holiday Activities and Food Coordinator role. Starting in January 2023, the successful candidate will work

alongside the HAF Programme lead partner organisation, wider CYPS teams, schools, public health colleagues and external partners in order to develop the programme further with a particular emphasis on providing a wraparound service for families, and increasing the number of those engaging with the programme.

### **Stronger Communities Programme Work**

In addition to the above, and leading on or supporting the delivery of a range of other countywide programmes such as the Homes for Ukraine Programme, Household Support Fund and North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF), the Stronger Communities team continue to deliver on the following:

#### **Reboot North Yorkshire**

Work on Reboot North Yorkshire continues to progress with a particular focus on encouraging the public and small businesses to think of donating their surplus or unwanted devices to Reboot NY before disposing of them. The number of organisations and services referring their clients into the scheme has increased and 70 devices and 83 SIM cards have been gifted to socially isolated individuals or those in need, during the last quarter. This included some Ukrainian guests who needed a device to access education and training.

#### **Community Mental Health Transformation**

Stronger Communities continue to work in partnership with the NHS to transform community based mental health services and support 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.

### **Libraries**

I would like to start with advising Members that use of libraries continues to grow with book issues increased by 25% since we last met.

The summer and early autumn is always a busy time for libraries with the Summer Reading Challenge closely followed by national Libraries Week plus several other national promotions including Get Online week. It certainly seemed as if someone flicked a switch at the beginning of the summer holidays and life suddenly began again – that said we are still being cautious and safe for everyone.

Libraries are supporting many of the council programmes. The last few months have also seen our libraries supporting over 3,000 people to access their food vouchers as well as 70 IT devices and 83 SIM cards distributed to vulnerable, elderly and refugees via [ReBoot](#). Although it has been a mild October all our libraries are preparing to offer a warm space this winter.

Early September saw the holding of the national Public Library User Survey, I hope to inform you of the results next time we meet. However, that is not the only consultation supported – libraries also have the Let's Talk, Devolution and Voice and Representation Older Persons surveys ongoing.

July saw the soft opening of the Newcastle Building Society within Knaresborough Library – this sees the provision of much missed banking services within this community that we hope will also bring new library users. This follows the successful colocation at Hawes with more libraries hosting drop-in advice sessions from others including Lloyds and Barclays. The official launch took place on 26 October with Cllr Atkinson in attendance.

### **Summer Reading Challenge**

A full report has been circulated so I won't say much except that it was an amazing summer being able to hold real live events in libraries. Overall, just over 8000 children took part with 733 joining the library to do so. A special mention for Harrogate, Skipton and South Craven libraries who all had the highest number EVER taking part.

### **Libraries Week**

Art sessions, poetry readings and author talks were among the highlights of this week-long national celebration of all things library aimed at encouraging residents to see what is on offer at their local library.

Libraries Week takes place each October, this year the theme was Never Stop Learning, highlighted the central role that libraries play in supporting life-long learning whether that be taking up a new hobby or learning a new skill.

Among the events held was a talk, at Filey Library, from actor, musician and choreographer Tim Tubbs called Victorian Crime on the North-East Coast looking into the surprisingly dark and sinister side of Victorian seaside resorts. Bestselling author Andrew Martin spoke at Scarborough library on his railway detective series and his new book, Yorkshire There and Back. Many libraries held beginner art sessions with local artist Wendi New. Elsewhere, Boroughbridge library offered a free mindfulness taster session with MIND mental health charity, Stokesley library held a Ukulele class and Northallerton library helped visitors to pot their own plant.

Throughout the week several libraries hosted Activities Fairs to encourage residents to find out more about local groups and events. Craven College and North Yorkshire Adult Learning and Skills Service visited Bentham, Ingleton, Settle, Skipton and South Craven libraries throughout the week to promote learning opportunities and run taster sessions.

**National Poetry Day** on 6 October saw Rodney Dimpleby from the Yorkshire Dialect Society visiting Ripon library with Malton and Boroughbridge libraries amongst those who held poetry reading events.

October also sees **Black History Month** where we are promoting books from black authors

### **Health and Well-being**

Library's role in supporting the **Health and Well-being** of our communities is well known to go beyond that of reading for six minutes a day to reduce stress by up to 60%. Members may remember hearing about the successful Slipper Socials in my last report, several more are planned for later this month at Bentham, South Craven and Thirsk with more planned for next year.

Not content with this innovation our library service recently introduced **Tough Topics** packs with books and activities chosen by librarians and professionals to help children aged three to eight process their emotions and discuss difficult life-changing events. The aim is for children to talk to their families using practical activities included in each pack. They are based around the arrival of a new baby, divorce and separation as well as grief and loss. We know children don't always feel like they have the support to share the deepest feelings in their lives so we

hope this new initiative will encourage them to talk to their parents, carers, grandparents and other trusted adults.

Tough Topics packs are free to request and borrow from any North Yorkshire library. Fines will not be accrued when packs become overdue. For [more information on the library service and to find contact details for your local branch.](#)

For our older young people there is the new **Reading Well for Teens**

In 2020, almost half of young people said they did not feel in control of their lives and almost a third claimed that they felt overwhelmed by feelings of panic and anxiety on a daily basis.

The Reading Well collection focuses on topics such as body image, bereavement, social anxiety, boosting confidence, surviving online, sexuality, gender identity and mental health. It caters for a wide range of reading levels and formats to support less confident readers and encourage engagement.

### **STIM kits**

Libraries have recently provided a new set of sensory resources, called StimKits, to help create a friendly environment for young people who are on the autism spectrum when they visit the library. The StimKits get their name from the practice of 'stimming', a word used by people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), to describe self-stimulatory behaviour, which helps people on the spectrum feel relaxed and safe.

The kit, which includes a blackout pop-up tent, lights and various handheld sensory items, has been piloted successfully at Knaresborough Library. Parents of autistic children used the equipment when visiting the library and commented that it creates a welcoming environment for them and their families, helping children keep calm, relaxed and happy in the library space. There are six StimKits available to borrow for autism-friendly events in libraries across the county,

### **Ey Up!**

In partnership with the Dialect and Heritage Project, North Yorkshire's libraries celebrated Local and Community History Month in May. They encouraged customers to engage with the Great Big Dialect Hunt, a study by Leeds University to explore and document dialects as well as hosting dialect-themed events at libraries around the county.

Since then, our library service has secured £12,000 funding from the Arts Council and the Dialect and Heritage Project to run a number of events during the summer and autumn for invited participants.

The Ey Up! Project is working with hard-to-reach residents including young people, military veterans and those with mental health issues.

Workshops held include with participants from the Mencap charity led by print artist Dawn Brooks creative writing workshops with artist Andy Craven-Griffiths, in partnership with Pioneer Projects, at Bentham library and Orb mental health charity at Knaresborough library, and artist Suzie Devey and ex-service personnel in Catterick library and Horton Housing in Selby library plus James Koppert, rap artist, working with young people in the Scarborough area.

The project has a grand finale with the word-based original works going on exhibition in participating libraries later in the year.

## **GET Online Week / eBook promotion**

Our library service holds around 21,000 eBooks, with more than 4,000 users making regular use of the collection. Use has maintained steady since the pandemic but there is always scope to extend the audience. Each eBook borrower had a maximum of five entries entered into a prize draw to win an iPad, donated by the eBook supplier, BorrowBox.

The giveaway will coincide with Get Online Week, which runs from 17 to 23 October, and showcases the digital offer at libraries from IT support to coding.

Many people don't realise the huge range of digital resources that libraries have to offer. Every library member has access to thousands of eBooks, digital audiobooks, e-comics and e-graphic novels for free.

[View the digital collection.](#)

## **Support for Refugees/asylum seekers**

The service has been supporting both refugees and asylum seekers providing both language books and access to newspapers in a range of languages (via Pressreader). To enable targeted support a new borrower category was introduced in September and to date 269 have joined the library with many wanting easy read or graphic novels to improve English language skills. The Supermobile had a successful visit with those temporarily homed at the Yorkshire Gateway to introduce the service with about 30 attending with children's picture books proving very popular.

Many libraries are hosting Conversation Cafes, some specifically for Ukrainian families working with partners to provide other support and assistance. Scarborough Library held their first open Café in September with 29 attending from Romania, Afghanistan as well as Sri Lanka and Ukraine. With support from the Refugee Council this is now a weekly event. The library holds a Lego Club on the same morning so the children attending were able to join that and make new friends as well as borrowing books.

And almost finally thank you must go to the CRACCL volunteers who hosted a re-launch for their refurbished children's space with Baroness Harris of Richmond and Cllr Margaret Atkinson attending.

## **So what happens next....**

Work is progressing with the refurbishment of Scarborough Library, still on schedule for starting in the Spring of 2023. The downside is that the library will have to close whilst work is undertaken – members will be kept informed of progress.

And remembering that Christmas will soon be here Members will be delighted to hear that the now annual Christmas Reading Challenge is ready and waiting to go out to libraries towards the end of this month.

To finish I would like to remind fellow members that all our libraries are open and provide a space to sit, maybe read a book, chat or join an activity – there is always a **warm** welcome in your local library and especially so in the current cost of living crisis.

## **Registration Service**

Registrars continue to work to successfully reduce the backlog of outstanding registration of births. One issue that has arisen is when parents do not register the birth immediately as they are not intending to claim child benefit. If one parent earns over £50,000 pa, then they are liable for the High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge and at an annual income of £60,000, this may reduce the actual child benefit paid to nothing.

However it is still very important that couples in this position still register for Child Benefit. By “claiming” Child Benefit, the parents can get National Insurance credits which count towards their State Pension. This is particularly important for non-working mothers who may be out of the work place for a number of years.

The service continues to register an above average number of deaths every month, with no sign of an early return to the expected levels. Members may recollect that the ability to register a death by telephone ceased at the end of March 2022. The resumption of this service requires changes to the law. I can tell Members that provision (a Bill) for this change was laid before Parliament in July. I am unable to give an estimate for when this Bill will complete its passage through Parliament, but would suggest it will be spring 2023 at the earliest.

The Coroners service continues the process of change. A new part-time Area Coroner, Ms Catherine Cundy, has been appointed and is now in place. This will reduce the dependence on the Assistant Coroners who often hold other roles and so are not as readily available. This post is part funded by City of York Council.

## **Mobile Telephony**

There are currently two initiatives that will improve mobile phone coverage in rural areas of the county by 2025, the new emergency services network and the shared rural network. These two initiatives will see over 40 new masts built in the county with the first of these expected to be operational early 2023. Officers are working with the planning authorities and network build teams to ensure that the county benefits from the new infrastructure. It is anticipated that this will bring geographic mobile phone coverage of the county up to around 90% from its current 70%. Officers are looking at ways to cover the remaining 10%.

## **County Records Service**

In October, the Record Office was delighted to welcome back pupils from Applegarth Primary School in Northallerton as part of their annual Heritage Week. The week gives pupils the opportunity to learn about different aspects of the history of their school and the local community. This year's theme was the relationship between the school and the battlecruiser HMS Hood which was 'adopted' by the school during the early part of the Second World War. Pupils were given an exclusive behind the scenes tour of the Record Office and took part in a range of learning activities using material held by the Record Office, the school and the HMS Hood Association.

Over the summer, the Record Office held interactive archive sessions with three young-onset dementia groups. Organised by North Yorkshire charity Dementia Forward, the Time Out Together (TOT) groups in Harrogate, Scarborough and York meet for weekly social outings to enable some independence for clients. During their visits to the Record Office, we

shared documents from our collections relating to live entertainment in the 1960s, '70s and '80s – including items pertaining to the Eurovision Song Contest at Harrogate in 1982. The records inspired lively discussions and reminiscences – and a fair bit of singing too! The groups also enjoyed behind-the-scenes tours of the building, including the Reprographics and Conservation departments.

One of the questions most frequently asked of Record Office staff is 'How do I trace the history of my house?' To provide help and inspiration, a new online guide has been launched this month giving an overview of a range of the resources in the archive, the information they contain and how to use them. The guide has already received over 1500 views online. To accompany the launch, an exhibition is on display at the office and drop-in sessions will allow those keen to get started on their research to obtain tailored advice and guidance from staff.

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