

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 November 2022

Executive Member for Corporate Services, Including Legal & Democratic Services, Overview & Scrutiny, Performance Management, IT, Customer Contact, Customer Services (inc. the Council's Contact Centre), Refugee and Evacuee Reception and Support, Corporate Development, Member Support and Locality Budgets

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DAVID CHANCE

Legal and Democratic Services

The Democratic Services Team has continued to provide support to the LGR programme and the work being done to establish a new unitary authority. In addition to business as usual committee work, this has involved: setting up and supporting the 7 Member Working Groups; the establishment of the Transition (LGR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and a substantial increase in the number of meetings of the Member Working Group on the Constitution. The meetings of some of the Area Constituency Committees (ACC) have also increased in length and additional meetings and sub-group meetings have been convened. All of which has led to a significant increase in workload for Democratic Services.

Whilst the formal, public meetings of the Council's committees are being held in public, the option of officers joining meetings remotely is being offered where it is possible to do so. This then enables officers to attend whilst saving travel time, reducing mileage claims and reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Internal, private meetings of work groups and other similar member meetings are being held, in most cases, remotely using MS Teams. The meetings of the Executive and County Council are routinely broadcast and recorded. The practicalities of the technology to enable the broadcast and recording of all committee meetings, wherever they are held, is being explored.

Performance Management (including Customer Contact & Customer Services)

Technology and Change

A vast majority of calls made to the Service Desk each month are related to password resets. To make it easier to change individual login passwords and reduce the need to make a call into the Service Desk, Self Service Password Resets (SSPR) are now available. Around 1000 colleagues have already signed up to Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) and Self-Service Password Reset (SSPR) to be able to change their password whenever and wherever they need to without diverting the Service Desk away from business critical calls.

Microsoft 365 desktop client has also been made available in the Software Centre to move the aging Office 2016 suite into M365 and gives us more access to innovative ways to use our everyday IT tools. The update to M365 desktop client enables more collaboration on documents with colleagues without locking them out as other edit the page.

Throughout Q2, over 8000 product pages were searched for on Get IT Help as colleagues independently looked for guidance on specific IT apps, systems or products and over 2400 people have watched the M365 webinars so far. Sitting alongside the guidance on Get IT Help and webinars, the Microsoft 365 – Knowledge Sharing Yammer community continued to grow with over 220 colleagues sharing their thoughts, questions and ideas with the wider

group and read the monthly Microsoft 365 newsletter which shares all the M365 tips and tricks in one place.

Customer

The North Yorkshire customer portal now has 152,770 live customer accounts. This is an increase of 10,068 on the last quarter.

In June the Customer Services Centre started to transition to a 24/7 services to support our Social Care Emergency Duty Team Out Of Hours. This transition was completed in July. The Customer Service Centre now offers a front door for all Adult & Children's social care out of hours calls for North Yorkshire County Council and York City Council.

We have now launched web chat functionality in our Customer Portal to support Blue Badge applications. Customer can now chat with a member of the customer service team to get help and advice on how to fill out the application, what evidence to include and how to upload a photograph.

Cyber Security

The Boxphish training package has sent out over 56,982 phishing simulations with as little as 6% (3,568) of users being caught out and clicking the links. The package has also sent out over 51,786 training courses which provide further information on what to look for and how to deal with security threats. This training is not mandatory and at present we are seeing around 43% (22,259) of users completing the courses.

Household Support Fund

Work continued to distribute North Yorkshire County Council's second £3.5 million allocation of Household Support Fund in Q2. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded programme aims to support those most in need with significantly rising living costs between April and September 2022. In line with the expenditure guidelines and the agreed eligibility framework developed in partnership with the seven District and Borough Councils, 25,000 households across North Yorkshire received a direct award in the form of a shopping voucher in July 2022. This encompassed eligible families, pensioners and working age adult households. In addition to this, supplementary funding was awarded to North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF), Warm and Well, and 14 food providers across the County. In total, 38,692 households across North Yorkshire have benefitted from support in this phase.

Household Support Fund will continue between October 2022 and March 2023; final guidance was received from DWP in late September, and work has commenced on developing the scheme.

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and UK Resettlement Scheme

North Yorkshire County Council, in partnership with the district councils, has permanently resettled 127 persons (27 families) under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and to date 134 persons (34 families) – mainly Syrian refugees - under the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS).

The Afghan bridging accommodation hotel in Scarborough district has had its contract extended until 31 July 2023.

Asylum seeker dispersal and contingency hotel accommodation - The Mears Group is currently consulting with Borough Councils, North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire County Council about specific properties that Mears has identified to be used to accommodate asylum seekers in the county. The properties will be used unless the Police can make a strong case as to why they should not and if the Home Office accepts the reasons put forward on appeal.

The Home Office closed the Afghan bridging accommodation hotel in Selby district as planned at the end of July 2022 but then reinstated it in early August to accommodate single adult male asylum seekers. This was despite the concerns raised previously by North Yorkshire County Council and health partners about the hotel's isolated location. The County Council was not notified by the Home Office that the hotel had opened to house asylum seekers and instead found out the information through a VCS organisation some days after the first group had arrived. Some of the people being brought to the hotel have subsequently been found to be minors and so have become the responsibility of the County Council to support. The poor level of communication from the Home Office and Mears (contracted to run the hotel on a day-to-day basis) has meant that local statutory organisations were not given the opportunity to prepare for the arrivals. This has been a particular concern in relation to health services. The NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board is now in the process of putting in place a contracted provider to support the health needs of the asylum seekers in the hotel. The ICB is also going to be procuring a longer-term solution to support the health needs of migrants in other parts of the county, particularly Scarborough.

Pressures on the asylum seeker system created by the sharp increase in arrivals this year, the shortage of dispersal housing for asylum seekers to move into whilst their claim is being assessed, and an almost ten-fold increase in the number of people awaiting an initial asylum decision for more than a year between 2010 to 2021, means that more contingency hotel accommodation is likely to be used in North Yorkshire. We are currently awaiting further details, as of 28 October 2022.

County Councillor Locality Budgets

The eighth year of the scheme started on 13 June 2022 and the last date for the receipt of recommendations will be 31 January 2023. Members will be able to make recommendations totalling £10,000 and the arrangements are as in previous years. Members are asked to submit their recommendations as soon as possible, in order to avoid a surge in last minute applications. Any recommendations not received by the deadline date will not be processed and any money not spent will be returned to the general working balance.

254 recommendations have been made to date; amounting to £354,598 (39.40%) of the allocated funding. 19 members are yet to submit any recommendations, with just over 2 months remaining of the scheme year.

DAVID CHANCE