

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**17 MAY 2023**

### **STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR MANAGING OUR ENVIRONMENT**

There has been progress on both strategic and operational activity to support the climate change agenda over the past few months.

In January, Executive approved the public consultation draft of the North Yorkshire Council Climate Change Strategy and this went live in February. The Strategy outlines the role of the new Council in responding to the climate emergency and in working with all partners to deliver the York and North Yorkshire Routemap to Carbon Negative. We held several online and face to face sessions with our residents and communities to encourage responses to the Draft. We have had over 1500 responses so far. I will be listening to those views over the next few weeks and bringing the Strategy to Executive for approval later in the year.

We have been able to share excellent news that our bid for Home Upgrade Grant under the Phase 2 scheme was approved by Government. The £14 million bid will enable us to improve energy efficiency and low carbon heating in 700 homes that are not on the gas grid throughout the County over the next two years. We are currently procuring a delivery partner and will open this scheme in late spring. This follows on from our successful Sustainable Warmth programme which has been supporting home energy efficiency over the last year.

We have had further news regarding our Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure programme for which we bid as part of the pilot phase. We have received over £3.2 million capital and £89,000 revenue to take forward an innovative programme of Electric Vehicle Charge Point installation in our more deeply rural areas, working with communities for the provision of locations and potential for renewable energy support.

Officers are further developing both development and delivery bids totalling over £5.8million for the Devolution Deal Net Zero Fund which we bid for in January. This is across a range of services including Waste, Property and Community. We have the potential to explore some innovative areas for decarbonisation including district heating and the production of green hydrogen through this programme and we are now developing business plans for submission to the scheme.

The social values enshrined in our Procurement Policy are also leading to carbon savings. A recent example is our ambient food purchasing contract where we have worked with our supplier to save over 300,000 miles transport per annum and reducing the energy costs of cold storage facilities.

#### **Investment in York and North Yorkshire's Natural Environment**

North Yorkshire Council is set to deliver a £1 million DEFRA funded scheme looking at investment in the region's landscapes, rivers, coastline and urban green spaces. This will unlock significant value in the economy thanks to a trailblazing fund secured by York and North Yorkshire. The region is one of only four in England to each receive funding from the Government's Local Investment in Natural Capital Programme (LINC).

Through the investment, Government seeks to understand how to increase green finance for nature-based solutions such as tree planting and peatland restoration and support farmers to access new private sector investments that increase resilience in the landscapes they manage. In doing so communities and businesses can benefit through improved access, supported well-being, increased resilience to flooding, a better quality of crops and removal and storage of carbon from the atmosphere. This is a two year project running until March 2025 and will be a national pilot.

## **Public Toilets**

Officers are continuing to work towards the successful delivery of two new toilet blocks in Filey, at Country Park and the Ravine. We recognise the importance of the completion of these site for residents and visitors alike. We are now in the final stages of registering three new Changing Places facilities at Whitby Marina, Scarborough North Bay and Filey Foreshore. These sites will provide invaluable assistance to users and dramatically improve access in some of the County's most popular locations.

## **Licensing - Taxis**

The new harmonised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy went live on 1 April 2023. Vehicles were successfully rebranded for day one with new North Yorkshire Council licence plates clearly visible on the rear bumper, on the front doors and on the front bumper of licensed vehicles. Existing drivers, vehicles and operators gained "grandfather rights" and transferred automatically into the new regime. All new licence applications will now be fully subjected to the new policy arrangements which include. Changes include:

- An increase in the former maximum age of vehicles for many - up to 10 years old at the point of licensing or renewal;
- Licence fees are now waived for wheelchair accessible vehicles pending implementation of the Inclusive Service Plan;
- No specific colour requirements for Hackney Carriages;
- Drivers will need to undertake enhanced safeguarding and disability awareness training;
- Vehicle owners being subject to an annual DBS check;
- Hackney Carriage vehicles are now able to work anywhere in the district and use any of the ranks.

We currently licence around 1,750 drivers and 1,300 vehicles across the county. Implementation of the new policy will be monitored with a view to full review within a year. An officer working group meets weekly to address any problems and ensure consistency throughout the county. Work is now commencing on an Inclusive Service Plan focusing on improvements for passengers with differing abilities including wheelchair users.

Harmonised licence fees were introduced on 1 April. Harmonised maximum Hackney Carriage fares (the maximum that drivers can charge their customers) were introduced on 1 April.

**Other licences** - Work will be commencing soon to plan for harmonisation of all the other types of licences that we administer including alcohol and entertainment, gambling, street trading, scrap metal and many more. The officer working group is already implementing harmonised ways of working where former inconsistencies exist.

## **Trading Standards**

Following the successful prosecution of a business using misleading advertising practices to sell printer cartridges prosecutions have begun against two building contractors, one for trading unfairly by failing to fit fire doors as part of loft conversion work in breach of building regulations, and the second for fraud and trading unfairly in taking £5,000 deposit to buy materials but not supplying them or returning the deposit. First court hearings for both are set for 9 June 2023 at York Magistrates' Court.

Officers recently trained Topcliffe Parish Council volunteers to monitor and report on HGVs suspected on beaching the weight restriction in place in the village. The volunteers found all vehicles met the exceptions in the traffic order and were permitted to use the route. This is in line with trading standards officers' own experiences when monitoring the restriction.

### **Food Farming and Health - Animal Health Prosecution**

The owner of a farm in Wigglesworth, Skipton, has been banned from keeping livestock after an investigation by North Yorkshire Trading Standards officers revealed appalling neglect and suffering. Conditions on the farm were such that it was not possible to identify the exact number of carcasses on site. To reach them all, officers would have had to climb over mounds of dead pigs and enter pens in which livestock were standing in knee-deep manure. It is estimated that the number of carcasses exceeded 300. The prosecution concluded on 18 April when the farm owner received a 12-week prison sentence suspended for 18 months and was ordered to pay £3,000 compensation and £1,000 towards costs. He was also disqualified from keeping livestock. This action by trading standards was to protect the animals and ensure disease control procedures were in place, thus protecting the wider environment and maintaining the integrity of the human food chain.

### **Environmental Health**

Enforcement of Illegal Encampments – officers are working to co-ordinate our response to illegal encampments. This is with reference to impacts anticipated from Appleby Fair in June 2023 and also recognising that the current legacy arrangements and delivery structures for this enforcement function differs across localities (former districts/boroughs). This piece of work will also contribute to the developing joint Health and Well Being Strategy on Inclusive Health Communities which is being led through the Public Health Team.

### **Registration Services**

The transition to a new authority has gone smoothly from a customer perspective. Near normal levels of birth and death registrations, death registrations in particular finally appear to be returning to the expected average. The service continues to address the post Covid demand for ceremonies and very preliminary booking levels for 2023-24 indicate a decent year ahead. Although these estimates could well be impacted by the current financial climate. The programme of signage changes at the various sites is in progress.

### **Bereavement Services**

I am pleased to report that the programme of memorial inspection continues to make good progress in the managed cemeteries in the Scarborough locality, being delivered by in-house staff and an external contractor.

A new pet crematorium opened in Harrogate late February, with 11 paid cremations and 2 roadkill cremations carried out so far. We are receiving positive feedback and recommendations.

### **Coroner**

The Coroner continues to address the backlog of inquests due to Covid.

COUNCILLOR GREG WHITE