

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

19 JULY 2023

STATEMENT OF COUNCILLOR DAVID CHANCE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Legal & Democratic Services

The Democratic Services Teams from the former district, borough and county councils have been working together as one service since 1 April 2023, with their work co-ordinated across eight sites by a core management group. The focus in these first months has been upon aligning working practices, particularly with regard to the operation of Planning and Licensing Committees. There are also a number of projects underway to support the development of Democratic Services and support for members, officers and the public in the new North Yorkshire Council, including:

- a review of recording and broadcasting of council meetings
- support for members in their Electoral Division and the training offer
- how we work with and support the Parish and Town Councils

Since 1 April 2023, there has been a welcome increase in public participation in decision making by the Council, with more members of the public submitting questions and statements to the meetings of the Council's committees, and an increase in the number of petitions submitted through the Council's Petitions Scheme. The latter has involved an increase in the number of referrals to the Area Constituency Committees (ACCs) for consideration and a subsequent increase in the number of recommendations then made to the Executive and/or Executive members. As a Council, we seek to encourage engagement with the public and stakeholders and to be locally attentive and responsive.

The ACCS completed their first round of meetings in June. These were the first meetings of this next iteration of the ACCs, whereby they take on an enhanced role in their locality. The work taken on by the ACCs will develop over time as they go through issues of key concern locally, play a greater role in local economic development, hold service providers to account for their performance (the Council itself and other organisations), lead on local scrutiny and link in with key local agencies and organisations such as the Parish and Town Councils and the community networks.

The Member Working Group on the Constitution continues to play a key role in reviewing the Constitution and making recommendations to the Executive and Council for any necessary changes or updates to reflect changes in the law, guidance or working practices. The working group is cross party and politically balanced. It last met in June and will meet again in October.

The School Admission Appeals Service provides a statutory service and works to the Department of Education School Admissions Appeals code. Since April, it has been administering the bulk admissions appeals for primary and secondary schools ahead of the start of the September school term. The work will continue through to the end of the summer school term in late July. Typically, 350 appeals are heard each year over this period in addition to the 'in-year' appeals.

Councillor Locality Budgets

The ninth year of the scheme started on 3 April 2023, and the last date for the receipt of recommendations will be 31 January 2024. Members are able to make recommendations totalling £10,000 and the arrangements are as in previous years. With the exception that a member may increase their maximum spend on a project from £5,000 to £10,000 if the grant is to assist organisations providing support to the public due to the cost of living crisis.

This year Councillors are particularly encouraged to focus on projects or activities that respond to local needs and community initiatives arising from the cost of living crisis, the impact of climate change, and/or that promote the Council's Stronger Communities programme.

165 recommendations have been made to date, amounting to £160,600 (17.84%) of the allocated funding.

Customer, Revenue & Benefits

Household Support Fund (HSF)

Work commenced in Quarter One on the development of the fourth phase of HSF. The Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) funded programme aims to support those most in need or crisis with significantly rising living costs in 2023/24.

In line with the expenditure guidelines and the agreed eligibility framework and delivery plan, c25,000 households across North Yorkshire will receive a direct award in the form of a shopping voucher to support them over the autumn and winter months. This will encompass eligible families, pensioners and working age adult households, as well as those who missed out on other forms of national Cost of Living support. In addition to this, funding has been awarded to:

- North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF), enabling the maximum number of awards for emergency food and utilities to remain at four over a 12 month rolling period
- The provision of Energy Support which will be available from 1 September 2023
- Food Support: a grants scheme for providers of free or low-cost food was launched in Quarter One
- An HSF Exceptional Circumstances Fund will be delivered, to support those who may have missed out on support due to circumstances beyond their control throughout the time period the direct award is live

North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund

Caveat: data between April 1st April - 25th June 2023

In Quarter One, 2,892 applications were received^[1] with a 92% approval rate. A total of £344,135 was spent^[2], with 40% on food and energy vouchers, and 60% on standard awards. In keeping with previous years, the highest levels of demand are seen in Scarborough (39%), followed by Harrogate, with lowest levels of demand in Richmondshire (4%).

^[1] Compared to 2,648 applications received and the 2,399 approved in Q1 22/23 (last year comparison).

^[2] Compared to £303,816 spent Q1, 22/23.

Table 1 ↑ arrow highlights that this quarter has seen an increase against both time period comparisons used in this table, last quarter, and the same quarter 1, but 12 months previously

	Q4 2022/23 (Last quarter)	Q1 2022/23 (Q1, 12 months ago)	Q1 2023/24 (current)
Food Voucher	2,783	1,783	2,041
Clothing Voucher	84	79	78
Energy Voucher	2,089	1,581	1,418
White goods	84	231	311
Cash awards	1	0	0
Other household items	251	202	174
Furniture	309	256	411

Quarterly data update

- On average, NYLAF received 257 applications a week this quarter.
- There have been 573 first time applicants to the Fund this quarter.
- The number of food and energy applications decreased by 19% between April and May.
- The number of standard applications increased by 9% between April and May.
- Phone calls have seen a decrease of 21% between April and May.
- Vulnerability category data is also monitored monthly. It shows no significant change in who we are supporting through the scheme and in which geographical areas, with those with experiencing mental health challenges (32%), those who are homeless (21%) and families under extreme pressure (15%) continuing to be the three highest vulnerability categories in Q1.

Other key areas of note this quarter include:

- An extension to the Household Support Fund was announced in the Spring Budget so the food and energy award levels are staying at the increased limit of four awards in a rolling twelve-month period until the end of March 2024.
- NYLAF has supported the Governments Homes for Ukraine Scheme, with 25 awards going to refugees or host families this quarter to directly support those that have fled Ukraine.
- As well as the reported figures above, further food parcels were delivered across the Scarborough town area through our ongoing partnership with the Rainbow Centre.^[3]

^[3] Final figure tbc for this quarter. Using April data we could estimate 105 additional food parcels delivered.

Customer

Telephone demand for the customer service function has remained consistent over the 3 months since the launch of NYC (North Yorkshire Council) but performance has improved month on month.

In April, the average time a customer waited to be answered was 2 min and 51 sec and this has reduced to 1 min 43 sec in June.

The top 5 demands are:

- Bins
- Council Tax
- Roads, parking, and travel
- Housing and homeless
- Birth, deaths, and ceremonies

In May and June, the customer service function has balanced customer demand across all 8 customer service centres to provide the best performance for customers. Whilst this offers a short-term solution to answering calls quickly it does not allow for a full integrated service to be offered to customers. Full integration of all 8 contact centres will be completed through service transformation.

The new call routing solution linked to the new 0300 number continues to deliver an improved experience for a high proportion of customers calling. Only 3.5% of calls were handled by the safety net team in the month of June. The initial target was 20% or lower.

Currently only Craven is directing all call traffic through this solution, but the plan is to move other centres to enable the customer function to gather more customer insight and negate the need for customers to navigate through complex option menus.

A dedicated Cllr number has also been created. This number is 01609 797263. This number will be available as a priority number for Members between 9.00am - 5pm Mon, Tues and Thur. 9.30am - 5pm on Wednesday. 9.00am - 4.30pm on a Friday.

Seamer Horse Fair

At the time of writing, the Seamer Horse Fair took place in the Scarborough locality on 15 July.

North Yorkshire Council teams (Environmental Health, Facilities Management and Highways) and North Yorkshire Police worked together to manage the event through a Multi-Agency meeting that also included representatives from the RSPCA. This group met on a weekly basis in the lead up to the event and met more regularly if required to pick up site specific issues such as unauthorised camping and litter/waste clearing.

The Council site for travelling families to camp was opened from 12 to 15 July and numerous Traffic Orders were also in place to help manage the increased traffic around the location of the fair.

There were some reported instances of unauthorised encampments, most notably at the Filey Country Park whereby the Council took direct action through service of a Section 77 Notice and followed this up by initiating proceedings in Scarborough Magistrates Court to have the Notice enforced. Formal action was not required as following site visits from officers the Travellers moved on but the action taken by the Council ensured that other families were not encouraged to join the unauthorised camp prior to the opening of the official site.

Officers continued to engage with Police colleagues at a senior and operational level throughout the event and a follow up meeting will be taking place to discuss planning for next year's event. Members should contact Callum McKeon, Assistant Director for Regulatory Services, if they have any issues related to the fair that they wish to discuss.

Stronger Communities

Community Anchor Organisations (CAOs)

In February 2023, as part of the long established 'Achieve Together' Investment Programme, Stronger Communities opened a new opportunity to establish a Community Anchor model for North Yorkshire. In Q1 evaluation of submissions took place, with 23 place-based organisations from across the County progressing to the next stage of development work, which will encompass a collective assessment workshop and the development of organisational action plans. For the ten localities where a suitable CAO has not been initially identified, development work will continue to explore the potential for a local voluntary sector organisation to become a CAO, or to look at alternative models.

Recognising that in our larger urban areas where there are a number of distinctive neighbourhoods, the model of a single place-based community anchor may not work, we are working with local partners in Harrogate and Scarborough to understand what the optimal options for investing in Community Anchors are in those areas. Work on this will also progress in Q2.

Community Partnerships

In Q1, Executive agreed to develop the ambition of supporting local partnership and multi-agency working through the establishment of local Community Partnerships, focussing on principal towns and surrounding areas and reflecting natural communities. This will take a phased approach, with work starting in Q2 in five pilot areas: Easingwold, Leyburn and Middleham, Ripon, Sherburn and Thornton-le-Dale and rural hinterland.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

The HAF programme continues to develop and improve its reach in all areas of North Yorkshire. The Easter programme saw 8841 free HAF sessions enjoyed by 2200 children who met the Department of Education (DfE) criteria, and an additional 1173 children and young people who didn't qualify also took part in the activities using paid for places. Having blended sessions helps FSM children and young people to take part in the same activities as their non-FSM friends without cost being a barrier. It is important to note that having paid for places does not reduce the quantity of HAF funded places but often gives the provider the benefit of economies of scale when using hired premises.

Easter's monitoring and feedback was the first year that providers have reported significant non-attendance and cancellations being an issue. In order to tackle this for the summer period, an online booking system has been put in place to proactively manage bookings. Alongside this, we will be mindful that not everyone has access to the internet, and we must ensure that the booking system is not a barrier that prevents children and young people from attending.

HAF codes for summer 23 have already been distributed to children and young people with summer activities being promoted on the North Yorkshire Together FEAST website and by the providers locally. There are 66 different providers running sessions across the County providing a broad range of activities. This year, particular attention is being given to neurodiversity and understanding how activities need to be flexible in order to provide the best possible experience for all children.

Homes for Ukraine

Between the 1 April and the end of June 2023, 49 additional Ukrainian guests arrived in North Yorkshire, making a total of 1336 arrivals since the start of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. During this quarter we have seen a rise in the number of single guest arrivals joining family members in North Yorkshire.

The number of guests still living with a sponsor is approximately 616, reduced from 733 in Q4 2022/23.

Since the start of the scheme, 720 guests who initially arrived in North Yorkshire have moved on from their sponsors' accommodation. Further detail relating to these movements is summarised in the table below (cumulative since the start of the programme):

	Households	Individuals
Re-matched to sponsor outside of North Yorkshire	24	47
Returned to Ukraine	86	172
Moved to another country	21	41
University	3	3
Private Rental – in North Yorkshire	155	371
Social Housing – in North Yorkshire	10	24
Private Rental – outside of North Yorkshire	33	62
TOTAL	332	720

*Please note there may be a small amount of time between guests moving and informing NYC, so above figures could vary slightly.

Health and Wellbeing

Stronger Communities continue to work 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, working with four place based multi-agency partnerships to develop and/or pilot new community -based services and projects through grant funding to voluntary organisations and community groups with the over-arching aim of enabling people with a serious mental illness to live well in their communities.

Local Food Support

Work on the collaborative insight work with City of York Council to better understand the regional food insecurity landscape is now complete, with the final report made available in Q1. The work evaluates the range of food support services that were established during the pandemic and explores potential opportunities for future service provision alongside a series of recommendations. Work has now commenced to start planning a partnership event to launch the findings/carry out some further engagement work in autumn 2023, and the findings are already being used to inform other related work areas both internally across the Council, and externally with partners.

Reboot North Yorkshire

Work on Reboot North Yorkshire continues to progress with a steady flow of referrals into the scheme from a broad range of organisations and NYC services. This quarter, 58 devices have been gifted to socially isolated individuals or those in need of a device to access training or to continue their education. Our community partner Craven Reboot have similarly

been active in gifting devices, supporting people with IT needs, and encouraging donations within their communities.

This quarter also saw the start of conversations with York Community Furniture Stores who have branches in Selby and Scarborough, about how they could be involved with the project. They already have a successful scheme called IT Reuse York.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

Stronger Communities continue to take the lead role in the delivery of the Communities and Place strand of the Council's UKSPF programme. An advisory group is in place made up of public and voluntary sector partners, who are overseeing the work being progressed on the year one allocations.

COUNCILLOR DAVID CHANCE