

# North Yorkshire Council

## Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

11 September 2023

### Stronger Communities Programme & Corporate Volunteering Update

#### Report of Assistant Chief Executive Local Engagement

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#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the work of Stronger Communities and the Corporate Volunteering Programme.
- 1.2 To propose future reporting arrangements in light of the imminent creation and development of the Localities team.

#### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Throughout a period of significant change for local government in North Yorkshire, the core work of the Stronger Communities team has continued, with the start of the developmental journey of the Community Anchor Organisation (CAO) model, exploring how locally rooted organisations can support the health, wellbeing and prevention agenda, and wider community resilience in localities.
- 2.2 A number of new countywide and national initiatives have been launched over the past 18 months; the latter particularly focussing on alleviating the cost-of-living pressures being felt by families and residents on low incomes. Stronger Communities are leading on a number of these programmes and work in partnership with others within the Council and externally.
- 2.3 Post Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the Corporate Volunteering Programme continues to be delivered by the Resourcing Solutions Team – HR, sponsored by Stronger Communities, with approximately 4400 volunteers currently engaged in activity.

#### **3.0 Core Stronger Communities Programme Activity**

##### **3.1 Community Anchor Organisations**

As previously reported to Committee, in February 2023 as part of its established 'Achieve Together' Investment Programme, Stronger Communities opened a new opportunity to establish a Community Anchor model for North Yorkshire. Grants of £15,000 a year (for up to 3 years) were made available from April 2023

for place rooted organisations, based in principal service towns or centres, who are able to serve a wider hinterland. This investment supports the core aims of the wider Stronger Communities Programme which include:

- Prevention and reducing health inequalities.
- Community resilience.
- Social regeneration.

3.2 Following a competitive application and evaluation process, 23 place-based organisations from across the County progressed to the next stage of development work, which encompassed a collective assessment workshop (July 2023), and the subsequent development of organisational action plans which is on-going. 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.

3.3 Recognising that in our larger urban areas, characterised by distinctive neighbourhoods, it was recognised that 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.

3.4 The funding currently being used to support this work is non-recurring and as such, the challenge is to develop financially sustainable options for CAOs in order for them to become more financially independent and resilient - and therefore less dependent on public sector grants – by identifying and establishing diverse income streams – which could include earned income through contracts and charging.

### 3.5 Community Partnerships

In May 2023, the 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 the Stronger Communities team commencing work in five pilot areas: Easingwold, Leyburn and Middleham, Ripon, Sherburn and Thornton-le-Dale and rural hinterland.

### 3.6 Inspire Grants

Stronger Communities has awarded £34,911 through the small, grass roots Inspire Grants supporting 38 groups and / or projects to date in 2023/24. This investment has allowed communities and small grass roots groups and organisations to develop and deliver local events and activities in their communities. A geographical breakdown of the grants awarded is outlined below.

District	No. of Grants	Total Value	% of total number	% of total spend
Craven	1	£629	2.6	1.8
Hambleton	2	£2,000	5.3	5.7
Harrogate	9	£8,495	23.7	24.3
Richmondshire	3	£2,500	10.5	7.2
Ryedale	4	£3,690	10.5	10.6
Scarborough	12	£11,781	31.6	33.7
Selby	5	£4,816	13.2	13.8
Countywide	1	£1,000	2.6	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34,911</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.0 Wider Stronger Communities Programme Work

4.1 In addition to the core work of the Stronger Communities team; it is also leading on a number of countywide and national programmes.

4.2 The range of activities the team are leading on, or are contributing to, is broad and varied:

- Holiday Activities and Food Programme for free school meal eligible children (Department of Education funded)
- Household Support Fund - awards to low-income households (Department of Work and Pensions funded)
- North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF)
- Homes for Ukraine Programme (Home Office)
- Wellbeing and Prevention investment – Stay Healthy, Independent and Connected
- Digital Inclusion (Reboot North Yorkshire)
- Cost of living support
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Communities & Place (UKSPF)
- Mental health programmes (NHS)

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

The HAF programme – FEAST - continues to develop and improve its reach in all areas of North Yorkshire. The Holiday Activities and Food Coordinator has been working with North Yorkshire Together (NYT) partners, and colleagues in Children and Young People’s Service (CYPS), Stronger Communities and Public Health to develop the programme further with a particular emphasis on providing a wraparound service for families.

In order to develop strong local delivery providers across the county, NYT are developing their training offer to ensure that children and young people can be well supported emotionally, as well as access a diverse range of activities. Topics

that have been identified by providers in previous phases of delivery as potential areas that they would welcome additional support with include trauma-based practice and supporting those with special educational needs and disability, autism and neurodiversity.

Our programme leaders have also been reinforcing the importance of FEAST activities to schools and encouraging them to explore how they could be involved in hosting sessions, as well as promoting activities to their children and young people. Through the work that has been done with the Active Leaders programme via secondary schools it is also hoped to develop a young leader's pathway.

Easter's data was positive with 2200 eligible children and young people enjoying 6887 free activity sessions. In addition, 1173 of their peers also took part in these activities where paid for opportunities were offered. The Summer FEAST programme is currently running; initial indications are good with an increased number of providers, locations, and places on offer from previous delivery periods. Once delivery is complete and providers have submitted their monitoring, the FEAST team will assess the data and general feedback to help inform and guide future phases of delivery.

#### 4.4 Household Support Fund

In the last 6 months, Stronger Communities has continued to lead the development and administration of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded Household Support Fund, which 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, c22,500 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 via North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law Centre.
- Food Support: 18 grants have been awarded to locally based free or low cost providers across the County.
- 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.

HSF will be transitioned to Customer, Revenues and Benefits in 2023/24.

#### 4.5 North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF)

Stronger Communities continue to administer NYLAF, an emergency fund that provides support for those deemed most vulnerable in the County, and who often, are in crisis.

Year to date, NYLAF has received 4,131 applications. 3,785 (92%) of which have been approved. Grant expenditure in total has been £503,559.27. (38% food / energy awards, 62% standard awards). 39% of applications this year have come from the Scarborough district, compared to 4% of applications received by the Richmondshire district. Historically, this trend has continued to highlight both Scarborough and Harrogate as the geographical areas with most demand on the scheme whilst Richmondshire and Craven place the least demand.

Mental health issues and homelessness account for the majority of reasons that people apply to the fund, accounting for 29% of all applications received. Last financial year, NYLAF received 13,229 applications. 91% of these applications were approved, with 20,032 individual items provided. Demand on the scheme in the last couple of years has been unprecedented and expenditure in 23/24 was over £1.4m.

NYLAF will be transitioned to Customer, Revenues and Benefits in 2023/24.

#### 4.6 Homes for Ukraine Programme

Officers from the Stronger Communities team continue to coordinate and lead the Homes for Ukraine Programme, supported by a number of dedicated posts within specialist services such as Living Well, Early Help and Adult Learning, to ensure support is provided with language development, employability and integration.

Although guest arrivals have dropped significantly in recent months, we have seen a rise in the number of single arrivals joining family members already in North Yorkshire.

Due to a grant award through the Local Authority Housing Fund, the Council has worked with Broadacres to acquire additional houses that are being offered to Ukrainian families in North Yorkshire at affordable rents. Those at greatest risk of homelessness have been prioritised in the allocations process. This overall increase in housing stock means reduced pressure on the private rental market, as well as providing families with a sustainable housing option.

Of a total of 1336 arrivals in North Yorkshire, 720 guests have now moved on from their original sponsor as follows:

	<b>Households</b>	<b>Individuals</b>
Rematched to new sponsor outside of North Yorkshire	24	47
Returned to Ukraine	86	172
Another Country	21	41
University	3	3
Private Rental – N. Yorks	155	371
Social Housing – N. Yorks	10	24
Private Rental – Out of Area	33	62
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>720</b>

A range of partnerships have also been developed with a number of voluntary and community organisations, with investment provided to support with the provision social events, activities, conversational language classes and integration opportunities.

#### 4.7 Well-being and Prevention – Stay Healthy, Independent & Connected

The Stay Healthy, Independent and Connected (SHIC) grants scheme was launched in late 2022, with new providers starting work in their localities on 1 April 2023. Stronger Communities continue to work with colleagues in Targeted Prevention (Health and Adult Services) to support the scheme and to explore synergies between SHIC and the various areas of work that Stronger Communities are involved in.

#### 4.8 Digital Inclusion

The team continue to promote the digital inclusion agenda within the authority and with our wider community partners. This includes the continued development of digital champions through our partners Digital Unite, building on the work with Citizen’s Online prior to the pandemic. Reboot North Yorkshire continues to thrive with requests for devices being fulfilled from all areas of the County. These devices are making a significant difference to the new owner’s lives, allowing people to continue with education and training, to access services and information online, to keep in touch with family and friends and to improve their mental health.

Strategically the team are working with the Humber and North Yorkshire integrated Care System (ICS) Digital Inclusion Network and the UK Shared Prosperity Programme (UKSPF) team to ensure that the UKSPF investment planned for 2024/2025 is designed to best meet the needs of those most digitally excluded in North Yorkshire. A programme to support the development of community based digital access points will be launched as part of the UKSPF prospectus later this year with funding available from 1 April 2024.

#### 4.9 Cost of living - Food Insecurity

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 spring 2023<sup>1</sup>. 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 September 2023, and the findings are already being used to inform other related work areas both internally across the Council, and externally with partners.

The team continues to work closely with the Public Health Healthier Lives, Community and Economy team who are looking to bring together a range of organisations in the food sector to establish a food system framework and ultimately a food partnership to address the immediate to long term challenges presented. Joint work on exploring the impact of cost of living on health outcomes has continued with a multi-agency event taking place in September 2023.

As outlined in Section 4.4, a further 18 grants have been awarded through the current round of HSF to support free or low-cost food provision across the County over the winter period.

#### 4.10 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

As previously reported, there is a strong emphasis within the criteria for UKSPF on place shaping, community empowerment, engagement and strengthening the voluntary and community sector, and Stronger Communities are taking the lead role in the delivery of the Communities and Place strand. The following progress has been made in 2023/24:

- 11 feasibility studies have now been funded totalling £163,310. Feasibility study priorities include:
  - Building capacity in people & places.
  - Generating new ideas for community regeneration.
  - Promoting healthy & active communities.
  - Increasing levels of digitisation.
  - Celebrating distinctive and vibrant places.
  - Growing businesses.
  - Promoting innovation.
  - Attracting new investment through sector growth.
  - Promoting climate resilience and decarbonisation.
- Following an open bidding round, North Yorkshire Sport has been appointed to manage and administer the Active Travel and Sports grants programme, focussed on improving access to green space, new and

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<sup>1</sup> The final report and associated assets can be viewed at [York and North Yorkshire Covid Recovery Insight Project: Food Insecurity – Just another WordPress site \(skyblue.org.uk\)](#).

improved sports facilities, active travel measures and promoting healthy lifestyle campaigns in North Yorkshire until 31 March 2025.

#### 4.11 Mental health programmes

The Stronger Communities team have worked in partnership with colleagues in Public Health and the NHS to deliver a range of community led mental health projects since 2019. These include grass roots suicide prevention programmes and other specialist mental health services. As part of the national Community Mental Health Transformation programme, Stronger Communities continue to work in partnership with the NHS for a third year to transform community based mental health services for people with a serious mental illness through building capacity within communities and the voluntary sector. The approach includes NHS 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.

The team, in conjunction with Public Health are also refreshing Headfirst, North Yorkshire's Mental Health Training Hub, with the aim of relaunching the site and broadening its reach in autumn this year. This will provide free (funded) places for individuals living / working or volunteering across North Yorkshire in the areas of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), Suicide First Aid (SFA), Mental Health Awareness and bespoke courses as required.

#### 4.12 Children and Young People

As previously reported, the Stronger Communities team continues to work with the Early Help team from CYPS to deliver their Get Going grants scheme that seeks to grow community capacity by working alongside and with our communities to stimulate, support and develop activities that enable children, young people and their families to be happy, healthy and achieving.

#### 4.13 Capacity Building

Stronger Communities Programme has continued to strengthen local community assets and infrastructure; this has included encouraging relationships and collaborations between voluntary and community sector organisations as well as stabilising, and / or building capacity within them if required. The impact of the pandemic on income and capacity within the sector, together with concerns in relation to rising fuel costs is resulting in concerns about their long-term viability and sustainability. Stronger Communities continues to work with colleagues such as Community First Yorkshire, The Two Ridings Foundation, the Lottery and other partners to identify issues and concerns and develop joint responses.

#### 4.14 Local Government Reorganisation

The work of the Stronger Communities team is now positioned within the



Localities Team, in Local Engagement. With the Head of Service now in post, work is currently on-going to develop and structure this new service area, bringing together the functions and work programmes of the Stronger Communities team and former District and Borough Council Communities teams to ensure continuity is achieved, but also accommodating development and growth of key work areas. It is anticipated that this will be complete by December 2023.

In light of the imminent structural changes, it is recommended that future reporting to Committee should take the form of a bi-annual update on the work of Localities team and the Corporate Volunteering Programme.

## **5.0 Corporate Volunteering Programme Update**

5.1 The Corporate Volunteer Project relates to all volunteering activity that takes place by members of the community to support North Yorkshire Council services. This includes volunteers who help across many different services from the Skipton Museum, Youth Justice Service, Libraries, Major Incident Response, Countryside Service and Waste reduction education.

5.2 Sponsored by Stronger Communities the corporate Volunteer Project is being delivered by the Resourcing Solutions Team – HR, recognising the synergies between the volunteer journey and employee journey, whilst acknowledging that there are key differences between the two. The focus for this project is to maximise and optimise the use of volunteers across all council services, creating consistencies in: marketing, recruitment, induction, expenses, training, ongoing support and efficient volunteer processes.

5.3 A Volunteer Sub-Group meets regularly to provide a steer for the project, discussing challenges and priorities and inputting into areas of work as they progress. This group comprises of representatives from Stronger Communities and the Resourcing Solutions Team and lead officers from the services that manage volunteers.

### **5.4 Volunteer numbers**

The number of registered volunteers in April 2023 stood at approximately 4400. This includes people who volunteer their time to support wider council services such as community Libraries and as School Governors. Since we have moved to one unitary Council, new volunteers who are not directly engaged by the council but who contribute towards supporting wider services are still being discovered. Detail of all the services who engage volunteers support, is provided in **Appendix 1**.

### **5.5 Highlights**

A volunteer in the Youth Justice Service has recently achieved 20 years of volunteering for the service, Officers are arranging a formal letter of thanks from

senior management.

National Volunteers Week was held during June. The Council organised some informal events for volunteers to come together, these were open to all NYC volunteers from all services countywide to attend and a total of 41 attended. Chairman of the Council David Ireton and Vice Chair Roberta Swiers attended these events to meet with volunteers and thank them for their contribution.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

6.1 It is recommended that:

- a) Members note the update on the work of the Stronger Communities programme.
- b) Members note the update from the Corporate Volunteering Programme.
- c) Members approve bi-annual reporting on the work of the Localities team and the Corporate Volunteering Programme in the future.

### **Report Authors**

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31 August 2023

## Appendix 1 – Number of NYCC Volunteers

Directorate	Service	Approx. number of registered volunteers	Role(s)
Environment	Countryside Volunteers	126	Checking paths, low-level maintenance and conservation tasks
Environment	Rotters	44	Events/shows, schools workshops and talks to groups all promoting reduction of food waste, home composting, recycling and reuse.
Community Development	Libraries	1433	Help customers in library, help with shelving and stock, deliver books for home library service, help with children's activities & IT
Community Development	Records and archives	25	Digitising records, cataloguing, organising materials
Central Services	Democratic Services	50	Volunteers serve as appeals panel members for exclusion or admissions appeals
Central Services	MIRT	16	Supporting people affected by an incident
Central Services	Ready for Anything	325	Database of community volunteers to be called on in an emergency.
CYPS	Adult learning	32	Volunteer teaching assistants (Syrian Refugee project and English classes)
CYPS	Youth Justice Service	37	Panel members, appropriate adult, mentor, reparation supervisor
CYPS	Young People's Council	5	A youth voice project for young people who have experienced Care Services
CYPS	Youth Voice Executive	12	A youth voice committee representing young people's view across North Yorkshire
CYPS	SENDIASS	5	Independent support for parents of children or young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), or for young people (16 -25 years) with SEND to ensure their education, learning or training needs are supported.
CYPS	School governors	1775	Serve as governors and trustees on school boards
CYPS	Peer Mentors	2	Peer mentors- current or former care leavers who have volunteered to mentor other care leavers.
CYPS	Chaperones	10	Chaperones who accompany children who have a licence to act or perform, to auditions/performances
HAS (Learning Disability Service)	Gardeners	1	Supporting service users with gardening and conservation activities

Central Services	Team North Yorkshire (Former Covid Vols)	111	Responding to COVID support requests (weekends) e.g. collecting prescriptions, shopping etc.
Community Development (former Craven DC)	Skipton Museum	28	
Community Development (former Craven DC)	Craven Tourist Information	12	
Community Development (former Harrogate BC)	Harrogate Cultural Services	10	
Environment	Litter pickers	250	
<b>Total</b>		<b>4376</b>	