

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

15 NOVEMBER 2023

STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR MANAGING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change

Since adopting the Climate Change Strategy in July we have been able to deliver several activities which will start the delivery of the Strategy across the Council. Officers have been further analysing the Lets Talk Climate consultation and sharing the results with our Area Constituency Committees to ensure that we deliver targeted programmes of work across the County to support businesses and communities to take climate actions.

In September, we launched the Shared Prosperity Fund Decarbonisation Programme to support communities and businesses to take climate action. This provides technical advice, decarbonisation audits and grant funding of up to £50,000 to support local projects. There is a particular focus to provide energy saving audits to Residential Elderly People's Homes to protect against the energy price rise.

In October, the Wider Partnership conference celebrated the 'Care of the Environment' category of the Community Awards, recognising the role of local communities in taking climate actions.

We had a successful bid for £1.2 million to implement a Local Energy Advice Demonstrator which will provide domestic energy advice in community settings and working in partnership with community groups, over a two year period.

The Beyond Carbon pump priming fund continues to enable our in house decarbonisation journey. Ten electric vehicle lease cars previously funded through the programme have now been delivered to County Hall and a further two projects to support rural EVCPs in former Ryedale District and a decarbonisation plans for NYC leisure facilities have been approved.

A further network of public access EV charging points has been fully rolled out in Scarborough which enables and improves low carbon transport options both for residents and visitors.

To support carbon sequestration and thriving natural world we have appointed a Woodland Creation Development Officer. The officer will take a leading role delivering a DEFRA funded project - the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF) - which aims to increase woodland creation in North Yorkshire. The project will have a particular focus on publicly owned land. We have also submitted an application for two Coronation Woods to celebrate the accession of King Charles III.

I hope to report further good news on our bids to the Devolution Deal Decarbonisation Fund in the near future. North Yorkshire Council submitted a range of proposals to the programme to support both our operational decarbonisation and communities to take further local action on climate change.

We are continuing to work closely with partners to support their climate change ambitions. We have responded to Government Energy Policy consultation and joined the Northern Powergrid Stakeholder panel. We are also developing joint approaches with City of York Council on 'adaptation' policy to ensure that we are prepared for the changing climate.

Waste

Selby Garden Waste Subscription Update

As at 9 October we have received over 19,000 garden waste subscriptions equating to a 54% sign up rate that has generated approximately £550,000 income for this year.

Recycling Week

During National Recycling Week which took place from 16 - 22 October, the Big Recycling Hunt aimed to engage children and families in the quest to find lost recyclables that often find their way into the rubbish. This included empty aerosols, plastic cleaning product bottles, plastic and metal toiletry bottles, and food tins. The annual national recycling behaviour tracker survey shows that many of these items are commonly missed from kitchens and bathrooms when people try to recycle at home. Lesson plans were designed for all schools in the county so that they could get involved in the hunt, and children were encouraged to create a poster, leaflet or video which they could share with Recycle Now, who run the national campaign. There was also a family challenge where people could share photos of lost recyclables in the wrong place. All photos will be entered into a monthly draw to win eco-friendly prizes from Recycle Now and could be featured on their social media channels. To bring the message home locally, the North Yorkshire Rotters attended six of our libraries throughout the week to engage children and families with the campaign and demonstrate some of the items that are often missed when recycling at home. The Rotters are a great team of volunteers who regularly visit events and locations across the county to encourage our residents to reduce their waste, compost at home and recycle more.

Licensing

Head of Licensing

A Head of Licensing was appointed on 1 September. Gareth Bentley formerly worked for Harrogate Borough Council and has over 25 years' experience in delivering licensing services.

Taxis

The Inclusive Service Plan work is well underway with stakeholders currently being interviewed. The focus is on provision for wheelchair users. It is envisaged that the work will be complete by Christmas with recommendations being fed into the full taxi policy review commencing early in the New Year.

Other Licences

Sub-Committee hearings are now happening routinely dealing with individual licence applications. These largely relate to taxi and alcohol licences and are taking place in the locality offices overseen by three Licensing Committee Members. Animal Welfare Licensing work, such as dog boarding and breeding, horse riding and animal exhibition, has been in focus and continues to be an area of continuing harmonisation. The Licensing Act and Gambling Act policies will commence review early in the New Year.

The Licensing areas on the Council's website are under constant review and development to improve the customer experience. Adjustments are being made weekly to improve access to information and to processes, including licence applications and payments.

Trading Standards

No Cold Calling Zones

Zones can be created where a whole street or small area of households agree that they do not want cold callers. Zones act as a deterrent to rogue traders and empower residents to turn cold callers away or to intervene if they see cold callers at a neighbour's property. Zones must be refreshed occasionally to ensure they are still wanted.

The zone at Faceby has been refreshed at the request of the village committee after cold calls from duster sellers ('Nottinghamshire knockers').

A new zone has been created at Aldborough. The village had the support of their local member, Cllr Robert Windass and had 100% support from residents across the whole village for the zone.

ECrime Team and NYTech

The team has been shortlisted as finalists for the national Tackling Economic Crime Awards in the 'Outstanding Team' category. The awards recognise excellence and innovation in tackling economic crime with entrants from across the public and private sectors. The winners will be announced in November.

We will be launching our online portal for processing web site takedowns in November. The portal will speed up the process for officers across England and Wales when requesting the takedown of misleading and fraudulent web sites.

Regulatory Services

Food, Farming & Health

A recent interview with Greatest Hits Radio allowed Trading Standards the opportunity to highlight the growing issue of non-compliant disposable vapes, providing consumer tips on how to spot an illicit vape. Speaking with Kathy Green of Greatest Hits radio, Divisional Trading Standards Officer Andy Eccles discussed easy-to-spot signs that indicate whether a vape is illicit and shouldn't be on sale in the UK. As part of the interview a product purchased by Kathy in Harrogate was discussed and identified as non-compliant – in response officers visited the Harrogate convenience store from which it was bought and seized a number of other illicit vapes and a quantity of illicit tobacco. Enquiries by Trading Standards and the Police are ongoing, with individuals associated to the premises also linked to intelligence of child sexual exploitation.

Environmental Protection

Air Quality

Officers from the Environmental Protection Service attended the Transport, Environment, Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Mid Cycle Briefing last month and discussed the Council's approach and commitment to Air Quality.

The team is developing opportunities for partnership working within the Council (Planning, Public Health, Highways, Climate Change etc) to produce a holistic approach to air quality and to raise the profile of this topic and integrate it into Council plans and policies in a similar way to what has been done with climate change. It is hoped that the approach can be formalised in a NYC air quality strategy which also incorporates recommendations from the Association of Directors of Public Health.

Officers will keep Scrutiny informed of progress and will report back as proposals are developed.

Registrars, Coroners and Bereavement Services

Registrars Service

The Registrar's Service is looking to work with colleagues in Culture Arts and Leisure to explore whether more Council premises could be licenced to hold wedding ceremonies. This is part of the current transformation work underway across the Council looking at ways to maximise income generation.

Bereavement Services

Work is underway to develop closer working relationships with the Leeds Diocese in respect of closed churchyards which are now maintained by NYC. The Council determines the extent and standard of the maintenance regime but the Diocese legal and governance framework has to be complied with when authorising certain works such as the felling of trees.

COUNCILLOR GREG WHITE