

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

17 February 2021

STATEMENT FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES, CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT, SCRUTINY, AREA COMMITTEES, PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND LOCALITY BUDGETS

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DAVID CHANCE

Stronger Communities

Support continues for those most at risk throughout national restrictions

As reported in my last update, the support offered by our communities to the most vulnerable people in the county since the start of the pandemic is continuing through the winter months. Following the relaxation of restrictions over the Christmas period the county along with the rest of the UK entered the third national lockdown at the start of January and the requirement for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) to 'shield' was once again triggered. There are about 25,000 people in the county who are in this category and our Customer Services team, along with colleagues from districts and Fire & Rescue service have been contacting anyone who has recently been added to the register and people who have indicated they may need support.

Our Community Support Organisations continue to support both CEV and anyone else in the county who may be self-isolating or those people who may need some help as they don't have any friends or family nearby to support them.

Since the start of the pandemic they have collectively clocked up over 92,300 hours of volunteering, delivered 58,000 bags of shopping or hot meals and made over 48,000 welfare and befriending calls.

I reported at the last meeting that the CSOs are currently contracted until the end of March, this has now been extended until at least the end of September and the Stronger Communities team are in discussion with the CSOs to determine what that support will look like going forward in order that it best reflects the needs of our communities.

Supporting the vaccination programme

Since the roll out of the vaccination programme just before Christmas, some of our CSOs have been asked to support the NHS by providing volunteers to help the public at vaccination centres. In addition, some of the CSOs and Community Transport providers across the county are also helping to take people for vaccination appointments in order to help to ensure that those people in the priority groups are able to receive their vaccinations.

Reboot North Yorkshire

An innovative new project has also been launched this month by our Stronger Communities team and Technology teams. Reboot North Yorkshire is a programme that invites people or businesses to donate any old (but working) IT kit they may have to help support people and families who don't have the means to get on line to access things like remote learning or to stay connected with friends and family. Staff and volunteers will then refurbish and recycle the donated items and make sure they are given to those people who most need them. There are about 20 drop off points across the county, including libraries and community libraries and we are hoping more voluntary organisations will sign up to become Community

Partners over the next few weeks. For anyone who doesn't have any equipment but would like to support this initiative we have also teamed up with The Two Ridings Community Foundation for cash donations. More information can be found here: <https://rebootny.co.uk>

Support for families to access Emergency Food and assistance

There are a number of options available across North Yorkshire to people and families who are struggling financially and need support to access food and essential supplies, including access to help from volunteers if people are self-isolating. Council funding of £2,663k has been provided for the measures below in 2020/21 and it has been supplemented by funding from DEFRA of £530k and from DWP of £1.4m (used to directly support children eligible for free school meals during school holidays from December 2020 to April 2021).

Anyone seeking assistance should call the NYCC Customer Services Centre: 01609 780780 – open 7 days a week. The NYCC Customer Services Centre can then signpost to all the support detailed below.

1. Community Support Organisations (CSOs)

There are 23 CSOs across the county who can advise people on what local support is available for people who are self-isolating and can arrange for volunteers to help them access food and essential items. The CSOs can also refer people to long-term help around financial planning and advice. Details available at www.northyorks.gov.uk/help-you-during-coronavirus-covid-19 CSOs can also be contacted directly in most cases.

2. North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF)

Food and energy top up vouchers are available from NYLAF for people in need who are self-isolating. These can be accessed from the local CSO, which can also arrange for volunteers to help people access food and essential items.

Food and energy top up vouchers are available from NYLAF for people in need more generally. Details available at www.northyorks.gov.uk/nylaf

3. Food Banks and Delivery Services

Local food banks, emergency food suppliers and hot meal delivery services operate across the county. £283k of additional funding has been given to 24 charities to help them continue this provision. The support includes things such as Meals on Wheels, Food Banks and Community Fridges. Information on what is offered in each locality is available from the Customer Services Centre or by contacting the local CSO. In addition, some members have elected to make grants to Food Banks through their Locality Budgets.

4. Financial Advice and Support

An additional grant of £80k has been awarded to the network of Citizens' Advice Bureaux in North Yorkshire (CANY) to provide additional capacity for them to offer advice and support to people who may need help managing their finances or access benefits. CANY work alongside NYCC's Income Maximisation team. People can also access this support by contacting their CAB directly.

5. Online directories

- Local community and commercial food delivery services are listed on the Buy Local directory: www.buylocal.northyorks.gov.uk
- General support organisations can be found on North Yorkshire Connect: www.northyorkshireconnect.org.uk
- A summary of all local help and support available during the pandemic: www.northyorks.gov.uk/help-you-during-coronavirus-covid-19

Legal and Democratic Services

By the end of January 2021, Democratic Services, working with Technology and Change and Communications had held 71 live broadcast meetings of the Council's formal, public committees. The meetings are recorded and can be watched on the Council's YouTube pages or the Website - <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/live-meetings> The existing primary legislation that enables local authorities to hold remote access, formal public meetings is due to expire in May 2021. It is hoped that the Government will enable remote access meetings of local authorities to continue as it has removed the need for travel to Northallerton for meetings, reduced travel costs, reduced carbon dioxide emissions and increased the public profile and transparency of our decision making as a Council.

A new committee management system, called Modern Gov, was implemented on 29 January 2021. The first stage of the implementation of this software has been ensuring a successful move from one system to another. People accessing committee papers may notice some minor changes in layout to the committee pages on the website. The second stage of the implementation will look at the introduction of the Mod Gov app for accessing and annotating committee papers, email alerts for members of the public interested in receiving committee papers and a number of self-service functions for councillors.

The Council's six Area Constituency Committees (ACC) are working more closely with the Scrutiny of Health Committee on the review of local, operational changes to NHS services. The ACCs provide valuable local insight into and intelligence upon the impact of any proposed changes. Previously, the Skipton and Ripon ACC has led the review of the re-development of the Castleberg Hospital at Giggleswick. The Scarborough and Whitby ACC is providing valuable local insight into concerns about the future vision for Scarborough hospital, the Richmond (Yorks) ACC is looking at the development of the Catterick Health Campus and the Thirsk and Malton ACC is reviewing a NHS project that is being set up across health and social care to look at developing primary care and ancillary services in and around Easingwold.

The School Admissions Appeals Team has provided remote access appeals hearings since early May 2020 under Regulations that were implemented in April 2020. These Regulations have been extended until September 2021 and so remote access appeals will continue to be held over the bulk season that runs from April to July.

County Councillor Locality Budgets

The sixth year of the scheme started on 3 April 2020 and the last date for the receipt of recommendations was 31 January 2021. County Councillors were encouraged to focus on projects or activities that responded to local needs and community initiatives; particularly this

year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of climate change, and/or projects that promote the Council's Stronger Communities programme.

Because of the exceptional circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chairman of the County Council gave a blanket call in exemption to enable the Executive Member for Stronger Communities to make decisions swiftly and with immediate effect, thereby allowing County Councillors to react quickly to changing circumstances and to respond promptly to local needs arising from the impact of the Covid19 pandemic.

A total of 552 recommendations were submitted, amounting to £686,170 (95.30%) of this year's budget. A report on the expenditure and operation of Locality Budgets in the 2020/21 financial year will be presented to Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2021.

A proposal for funding the scheme in 2021/22 is set out in the budget proposal to be considered by County Council on 17 February. If the proposal is agreed by County Council, I envisage that the County Councillors will be invited to make recommendations between late May 2021 and 31 January 2022.

DAVID CHANCE