

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

21 February 2024

STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR MANAGING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change

Since the last update, the structure of the new Sustainability and Environment Service has now been completed. This provides the resource to lead the Council's climate change agenda in addition to overseeing our approach to both mitigation (reduction of emissions), developing plans around adaptation (preparing for climate impacts) and utilising and enhancing the natural capital assets of North Yorkshire.

Work is currently underway to develop Directorate Climate Action Plans which will be brought forward this year to identify Council wide and service team specific, climate actions which support our ambitions. This will feed into the Council's Climate Change Delivery Pathway, which is also being developed. It will look to utilise community-based workshops and stakeholder engagement sessions, over the coming months, to help shape the plan.

Moving forward I intend to report further updates in relation to the development of a Council 'adaptation' policy, to ensure that we are prepared for changes in the climate.

The Shared Prosperity Fund Decarbonisation Programme continues to support communities and businesses to take climate action. We have already funded several projects, brought forward by local businesses, including LED upgrades, Solar Panels and EV infrastructure, with completion of some projects toward the end of Q4.

Services have also continued to bid for external Government funding, to support climate change project delivery, in addition to working with regional partners, key highlights include:

- £4million, to develop retrofit and low carbon heating measures in our social housing.
- £2million secured from the Department for Energy, Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) to develop a private/public or joint venture investment model to consider opportunities to raise investment into renewable energy projects and heat decarbonisation projects.

Following our recent submission to the Devolution Deal Net Zero Fund, we have secured £3.2 million revenue and capital funding for a variety of Net Zero Projects. We have also secured additional Home Upgrade Grant funding to retrofit of off-gas private sector homes.

Natural Capital Service

We have a range of natural capital investment initiatives and natural capital programmes, seeking to reverse the decline in nature, secure much needed investment and deliver wider environmental and socio-economic benefits. Some recent success include:

- Coronation Living Fund: £35,414.15 to create two Micro woodlands, in Selby and Tadcaster.
- Woodland Creation Accelerator Programme: funding of £150,000 to support woodland creation and tree planting opportunities including the appointment of a dedicated Woodland Creation Development Officer.
- Local Investment in Natural Capital Programme (LINC): North Yorkshire secured £1million funding to become a "trailblazer in natural capital investment". The two-year programme is being delivered locally through a partnership of the North Yorkshire Council, City of York Council and other key stakeholders such as the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the region's two national park authorities. It will include a number of feasibility studies to develop an investible pipeline of natural capital projects and to secure private finance.

Work also continues on the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Workshops and engagement sessions are currently planned to seek feedback from farmers and landowners. Further statutory consultation will take place later this year with the final document being brought forward in Q4 2025.

Following the restructure, the Environment Portfolio now also includes the two National Landscapes, Howardian Hills and Nidderdale, formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Projects remain ongoing across both National Landscapes to support Farming in protected landscapes, enhancements to the natural assets in these areas and to deliver projects which promote habitat restoration and conservation.

Waste

Transformation – a number of projects are underway to improve the customer journey when accessing waste services and to provide consistent services in an efficient way. The bulky waste booking process was harmonised and launched just before Christmas, resulting in over 77% of bookings being done via the new online booking system. Harmonised bulky fees and charges along with full consistency of the items that can be collected through the service will be in place from 1 April 2024. The garden waste service offer has been standardised across the County, including the collection season, terms and conditions, communications, bin sizes and licence pack and we will shortly have a single webpage for the service removing the need for locality look ups. Further opportunities to expand best practice including a single approach to holiday let properties is underway.

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) - a consultation on proposed changes to the HWRC service seeks views on how the Council will provide the service in the face of mounting pressures and costs. Views are sought on resident only access, limiting the number of times commercial-like vehicles can access HWRCs and changes to the commercial waste service. Government required the removal of charges for DIY materials meeting certain criteria from 1 January 2024. We have communicated the change to residents and are keeping the impact at HWRCs in terms of containers, vehicles and costs under review.

Member Working Group – in response to the challenges faced by new waste legislation and opportunities resulting from LGR, a new officers and members working group has been established to consider how to shape new policy and working practices. This cross party, “task & finish” group meets on a regular basis to consider issues such as bulky waste, harmonisation of the waste service and standardising waste policies.

Online Bin Collection Lookup – on 15 December 2023 a single online check your bin collection day function was launched on our website. All North Yorkshire residents can now check their bin or recycling collection day simply by entering their postcode. The collection dates are given for the next three months and show the bin type to be presented for collection and there is the option to download or print bin collection calendars – here is the link [Check your bin collection day | North Yorkshire Council](#)

Garden Waste Collection Service – a harmonised online payment process for all North Yorkshire residents to renew or opt into the garden waste collection service is being introduced for the 2024 collection season. Richmond area residents were the first locality to receive their renewal reminders and have been able to pay for their garden waste collections from 22 January – this area was chosen because Richmondshire residents will also be provided with a bigger bin for their garden waste, which then harmonises the size of garden waste bins across the County. There will also be the option for residents to keep using their existing smaller bins if that is their preference. Other residents started receiving their renewal information from 5 February, although this is being phased to manage customer demand. All North Yorkshire residents will receive the same garden waste licence pack for 2024.

Flood Response – the Malton, Norton and Old Malton Pump Plan was activated for a total of 33 days from 8 December 2023 to 9 January 2024. The multi-agency operational response was coordinated by the NYC Waste and Street Scene Operations Team in Malton with support from NYC Resilience and Emergencies, NYC Highways, Yorkshire Water and the Environment Agency. At the peak of this incident a total of 20 portable pumps were deployed to protect the affected community's properties from flooding and once again worked efficiently and effectively with only one property actually flooding internally.

Licensing

As well as the Head of Licensing we now have three area Licensing Managers appointed to oversee service delivery in the three new geographical areas that are based on current Parliamentary constituency boundaries, being Eastern, Central and Western. We also have a new post overseeing the considerable ongoing changes and harmonisation required to policy, procedure and technology.

Taxis – the taxi Inclusive Service Plan work is well underway with the wheelchair access study and report nearing completion. A few areas needed further exploration before we could properly conclude this work. This will feed into the creation of an Inclusive Service Plan, in consultation with Integrated Passenger Transport and our Transport Planners, and a full Taxi Policy review will be commencing soon. I am very keen that this work addresses the need for more wheelchair accessible taxis, availability of taxis in rural areas and taxi capacity at key times of the day.

Other Licences - Sub-Committee hearings continue 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. A bar licence in Whitby was recently reviewed by the Sub-Committee on a request from the police that it be revoked, an adjournment was agreed - pending sale of the premises to a new operator with a different business model.

We continue to review the Licensing areas on the Council's website to improve the customer experience. Adjustments are being made weekly to improve access to information and to licence applications and payments online 24hrs.

Licence fees - a full review of licence fees is underway to ensure the cost of these services are not borne by the Council, in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Trading Standards

Before Christmas we reported that the team had taken part in an awareness raising item on Greatest Hits Radio in promoting the many issues connected with vaping. Following the recent government announcement banning disposable vapes, introducing new powers to restrict vape flavours and their display in shops, the team will continue to engage with colleagues in Public Health in raising awareness in schools and to the general public and also in investigating information received about potentially unlawful activities.

It is acknowledged that vaping remains a harm reduction tool for adults who smoke cigarettes so the team will be reinforcing the key message from Public Health that 'if you don't smoke - don't vape.'

Regulatory Services

The Harmonisation of the Environmental Protection and Food, Farming and Health Teams is progressing well, with staff consultation due to start in February and the majority of the restructure completed by April.

Food, Farming & Health - over the Christmas and new year period the team have dealt with an E Coli outbreak and also an avian flu scare. Whilst the number of avian flu outbreaks across the UK has been relatively small this year Officers remain vigilant and participating in

training exercises with NYC colleagues and partners to ensure that we maintain the ability to respond rapidly to any situations that arise.

In January officers met with representatives from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to discuss our experience working through LGR and how we have managed our general performance and proposed staffing allocations in relation to Food Hygiene and Standards. The meeting was extremely positive with the FSA keen to explore options for alternatives to enforcement action at the lower end of the risk rating register. This input will feature in our service planning for 2024/25.

Environmental Protection - officers from the Environmental Protection Service are continuing to develop links with other services 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 approach to that of climate change. An Officer Steering Group has now been established which will help officers from various service areas across the Council understand better the joint opportunities that exist to help improve air quality across North Yorkshire.

The draft NYC Air Quality Action Plan is due to be discussed with DEFRA at the end of March and the steering group will help develop the content for further discussion with officers and Members.

Registration Service

The Ceremonies team is embarking upon a marketing drive to highlight the services and venues available for those wishing to get married in North Yorkshire. The team is utilising the Council's Facebook page and also advertising in the new Visit North Yorkshire guide with a view to increasing our bookings. These ideas have been implemented following a very successful staff service day last Autumn which has also led to the introduction of more contemporary and modern vows for couples should they wish to move away from the more traditional wording. The team is also working with Parking Services to proactively address some of the parking issues, that can arise in busy summer areas such as Whitby, where large events such as weddings can be affected by and have an impact upon local parking provision.

Coroners Service

Arrangements are being finalised to set up a secondment arrangement with North Yorkshire Police to allow a civilian officer from NYP to join the NYC team in what could be the first stage of a wider transformation of the Coroners support service. The secondment will allow us to explore the potential for integration between the Police and NYC teams and the delivery of a more effective and efficient service.

Bereavement Services

The harmonisation of the Bereavement Service is well underway and is on track to be completed by April. The nature and format of funerals in the UK is evolving and diversifying. I am keen to ensure that our service is able to adapt to the changing expectations and requirements of our residents. Officers are preparing an overview of the projects required, to ensure that the service is sustainable into the future, including the need for cemetery expansion, cremator capacity and facilities improvements.

Work is progressing in preparing a plan to harmonise memorial safety and rules and regulations for cemetery provision. We will also be preparing a harmonised approach to memorial sales.