

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

21 FEBRUARY 2024

STATEMENT OF COUNCILLOR DAVID CHANCE, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Legal and Democratic Services

Democratic Services continues to provide governance and clerical support to the emergent combined authority for York and North Yorkshire. The first meeting of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority was held on 22 January 2024.

The role of the Area Constituency Committees continues to develop. The focus in this quarter has been upon economic development and how seed funding can be used to ensure that key economic development project proposals are fully costed and ready to progress once central government funding is made available, often at very short notice.

Work is underway to migrate the historical committee papers from the former district and borough council committee management systems to the North Yorkshire Council Modern Gov system, which is a sub-site of the main NYC website – [Decision Making at the Council | North Yorkshire Council](#). The migration of the data will take place in March 2024.

The contract for HealthWatch North Yorkshire has been through the procurement process and the incumbent Community Interest Company was successful. HealthWatch plays a key role as a health and social care champion, engaging with service users and the families and feeding back to commissioners and providers their experiences.

Stronger Communities

Refugee resettlement (Afghan Relocations & Assistance Policy (ARAP)/UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS))

North Yorkshire Council (NYC) responded in December 2023 to the Home Office's consultation on the Cap on Safe and Legal Routes, which is expected to take effect from 2025. We concluded that resettling more than 55 people a year under safe and legal routes (UKRS and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)) would not be sustainable due in large part to the number of recent arrivals (Homes for Ukraine and ARAP), the lack of affordable housing available especially for larger families, and other competing service pressures and demands. Homes for Ukraine and ARAP will sit outside the cap that will be set by Government.

ARAP households continue to be resettled in North Yorkshire utilising additional Ministry of Defence (MoD) surplus Service Family Accommodation (SFA). As of 7 February 2024, 38 Afghan households have been accommodated in SFA properties (which are currently occupied), with a further eight households scheduled to arrive later in February and March.

Homes for Ukraine

Between the 1 October and the end of December 2023, 52 additional Ukrainian guests arrived in North Yorkshire, making a total of 1,452 arrivals since the start of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Since the start of the scheme 1,008 guests, who initially arrived in North Yorkshire, have moved on from their sponsor's accommodation.

Asylum seeker dispersal and contingency hotel accommodation

The national shortage of bed spaces in dispersal accommodation (long-term temporary accommodation) means the Government is continuing to use three contingency hotels in the county. Demands continue to be placed upon local services. However, the number of persons across the three hotels continues to fall, most probably due to the reduction in channel crossings in the winter months. There has also been a slight upturn in the number of moves into dispersal housing from the hotels.

Community Anchor Organisations (CAOs)

23 place-based organisations from across the county continue to work with Stronger Communities to progress a Community Anchor model for North Yorkshire; in Q3, this included the joint development of organisational action plans. For the ten localities where a suitable CAO has not been initially identified, development work continues to explore the potential for a local voluntary sector organisation to become a CAO, or to look at alternative models. Collaborative work with our key voluntary sector partners in our larger urban areas of Harrogate and Scarborough to explore options for Community Anchors also continues and is due to report in Q4.

The small scale Inspire grants scheme has continued to run, with 46 awarded in Q3. The team also continue to work alongside various voluntary and community groups to support organisational development and capacity building activity.

Community Partnerships

In Q3, the team continued 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 is taking a phased approach, with the team working in five pilot areas: Easingwold, Leyburn and Middleham, Ripon, Sherburn and Thornton-le-Dale and rural hinterland.

Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme

Developed with input from Healthy Schools, Public Health and FEAST (Food. Entertainment. Arts. Sport. Together), it provides a range of free resources and training for providers to use and share with families around cost of living/healthy lunchbox and healthy eating on a budget.

The HAF programme continues to develop and improve its reach in all areas of North Yorkshire with additional providers getting involved in the scheme for Christmas delivery, allowing for a more diverse programme to be delivered at a local level. An interactive map has been developed to show where providers for each of the holiday periods are delivering their activity.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

An Advisory Group is in place, made up of public and voluntary sector partners, who are overseeing the work being progressed. In Q3, notable progress was made in the following areas via the Communities strand of the scheme:

- The Community Grants and Village Halls and Community Buildings Grants schemes were launched, with the first round of awards due to be made early in Q4.
- The Physical Activity, Sport and Active Travel Fund continues to be successfully delivered by North Yorkshire Sport on behalf of NYC after its launch in autumn 2023.

Health and Wellbeing

Stronger Communities continue to work in partnership with the NHS for a third year to transform mental health services for people with a serious mental illness, through building capacity within communities and the voluntary sector. Focus in Q3 has continued to be the development of the Hub model.

Local Food Support

Following the 'Food Summit', a partnership and engagement event to launch the findings of the collaborative food insecurity insight work undertaken in conjunction with City of York Council in Q2, the first follow up online Community of Practice session took place in Q3, focussing on place based collaborative food access models.

Digital Inclusion

There is continued momentum on the strategic development of digital inclusion across North Yorkshire encompassing the three key strands of access, skills, and equipment. This includes establishing a new Digital Inclusion Leads Steering Group for North Yorkshire.

Digital Inclusion Investment: Research and development work began in Q3 to inform the coordination of the UKSPF Digital Inclusion investment programme in 2024/25; £480,000 capital infrastructure and £336,000 revenue for digital learning and skills. The aim is to stimulate digital inclusion activity through learning, skills, resources and volunteering.

Reboot North Yorkshire has continued to support digital inclusion with regular referrals into the scheme from a broad range of organisations, health, and NYC services. In Q3, 69 devices have been gifted to socially isolated individuals or those in need of a device to access training or to continue their education.

Councillor Locality Budgets

Councillors were encouraged to focus on projects or activities that responded to local needs and community initiatives; the impact of climate change, and/or projects that promote the Council's Stronger Communities programme. 782 recommendations were submitted, amounting to £874,066 (97.12%) of this year's budget. A report on the expenditure and operation of Locality Budgets in the 2023/24 financial year will be presented to Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee in June 2024.

Customer

Household Support Fund (HSF)

Work continues on the deployment of the fourth phase of HSF to support those most in need or crisis with significantly rising living costs in 2023/24.

21,191 households (94.4% of those eligible) across North Yorkshire redeemed a direct award in the form of a shopping voucher to support them over the autumn and winter months.

A second phase of the direct award, focussing solely on those who are in receipt of Housing Benefit but who have not received a Cost-of-Living payment, is currently live. This alongside HSF funded support being available via North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF), the HSF Energy Support Scheme delivered by North Yorkshire Citizens Advice & Law Centre, and 18 local free or low-cost food providers across the county until 31 March 2024. This phase of HSF has supported 42,625 households via 172,579 awards so far.

North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund

In Q3 (Quarter 3), 3,568 applications were received¹ with a 91% approval rate. A total of £433,854.66 was spent² with 42% on food and energy vouchers, and 58% on standard awards. In keeping with previous years, the highest levels of demand are seen in Scarborough (62%), followed by Harrogate, with lowest levels of demand in Richmondshire (7%).

NYLAF New Criteria Update

The current NYLAF criteria allows for four emergency awards, this was increased from two emergency awards as a result of the Covid pandemic and the Cost of Living Crisis. The current scheme is on course to spend the same as last year – £1.5m, with individuals applying to the scheme appearing to be becoming more reliant on the support available.

Initial amendments to the NYLAF criteria being considered are:

- Phased approach of reducing award entitlement from four emergency awards to three.
- Direct reduction of four to two as per how the scheme was originally operated.
- Bringing back need for agent referrals for food/energy awards (first time applicants to apply direct as normal, but any other awards to be referred in and applied for on the individual's behalf by an authorised agent working with them).

Customer Services

During Q3 we have continued to develop our approach towards being more customer centric and having greater insight into the demands to the service.

In Q3 Customer Services had 186,639 customer interactions, representing a drop in demand from the seasonal increase experienced in Q2. The top five demands for the Customer Service function by service area were:

- Council Tax
- Bins, recycling, and waste
- Roads, parking, and travel
- Housing and homelessness
- Social Care

These are the same top five seen in Q2 activity.

Customer demand by Channel

The most popular customer channel of choice is by telephone with (125,505 or 67%). The remainder were split across electronic (45,312 or 24%) and face to face (15,822 or 9%) channels.

Overall, 86% of telephone calls to Customer Services were answered within four minutes. Performance on telephone answering improved compared to the previous (Q2 - 83%). In October 83% were answered in four minutes; in November 87%, and 87% in December.

COUNCILLOR DAVID CHANCE

¹ Compared to 3,826 applications received and the 3,605 approved in Q3 2022/23 (last year comparison)

² Compared to £439,377.16 spent in Q3, 2022/23