

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

15 May 2024

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, ARTS & HOUSING
including Culture, Arts, Libraries, Museums, Archives, Key venues, Leisure, and Housing

Sport and Active Well Being Service

Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) is supporting investment into energy saving systems at public pools around the country. Four North Yorkshire facilities are among 300 pools to receive cash from the £60million capital investment programme.

The Council received £288,186, including £161,275 at Selby Leisure Centre for solar panels with the remaining funding secured for community swimming pools, including Tadcaster Swimming Pool, Ingleton Swimming Pool and Settle Swimming Pool.

These funded projects will be completed by March 2025.

Culture

Two key community focused NYC projects have just been confirmed as finalists in the Northern Cultural Education Awards 2024:-

Imaginosity (Imagination + Curiosity) was established at Mill Hill School in Northallerton with the aim of widening community engagement. During the programme at Mill Hill, SATs results, attendance and attainment scores have increased significantly above average. and was highlighted by Ofsted for contributing to pupils personal development.

Selby Stories, one of the High Street Heritage Action Zone initiatives, is also a finalist in this years' award. Selby Stories was the cultural programme for the Selby High Street Heritage Action Zone, aiming to breathe new life into local high streets, from regenerating historic buildings to engaging local communities through art and cultural projects. Selby was one of more than 60 high streets in the country to receive a share of funding from Historic England.

Selby Stories has been supported by The Selby Cultural Consortium – local arts and cultural organisations led by Selby Abbey with Performing Arts etc, Selby Big Local, Selby Civic Society, Selby & District Disability Forum, Selby Library and Selby Town Council.

Craven Museum in Skipton Town Hall, part of our Culture & Archives Service, has been shortlisted as one of five national finalists for the highly prestigious Art Fund “Museum of The Year 2024”. The winner will be announced in July.

Libraries

Household Support Fund (Round 4) - libraries across North Yorkshire were pleased to again offer support for eligible households to redeem their shopping e-vouchers. In this round of the Household Support Fund (targeted at around 3,700 eligible households) 520 people were supported during January and February to access their vouchers through libraries. That's approximately 14% of the total who were unable to redeem online for various reasons, including lack of access to digital devices and/or broadband at home, lack of digital skills or confidence in their ability or no access to family, friends or neighbours to assist. Libraries provide a trusted service for customers needing support and are particularly valuable in their provision of support for those in more rural communities who may not easily be able to access other face to face customer service points.

The **Mobile Library** service has successfully applied for funding from the DCMS 'Libraries improvement Fund'. The funding provides a significant capital sum of £150k for a new mobile library vehicle and is an opportunity for us to develop a modern, more accessible service. The library service will work in partnership with other services to support the Council's ambitions to provide local services within the context of a large rural County. This is the second time the service has been successful in an application to this fund having previously secured £200,000 for the refurbishment of Scarborough Library.

North Yorkshire Libraries celebrated **British Science Week** in March with 54 events taking place across libraries. Events focused on raising awareness, sparking enthusiasm and celebrating science, engineering, technology and maths with people of all ages and from all walks of life. Over 300 people took part in events that included coding, quizzes, team challenges and treasure hunts and the library showcased their physical and online resources available for people to borrow year round.

North Yorkshire Libraries celebrated **Under-5s Week** from 5-11 February 2024, focussing on everything that the Council does all-year-round for Under-5s and their families. Working closely with partners such as Early Help, Public Health, NHS, and Early Years, 92 reading and learning events were delivered across the county reaching 1780 people. 434 new library members aged 0-5 also joined and over 29,000 children's books were issued in February.

Five North Yorkshire Libraries successfully applied for **FEAST funding** to deliver events over the Easter holidays. This paid for high quality workshops to engage children in creative activities with illustrator Liz Million inspiring budding artists with cartooning and artist Deckle and Hyde delivering an entertaining puppet making workshop. 46 children attended the events which also included a free nutritious meal.

Venues and Attractions

Whitby Pavilion – the café refurbishment works have been completed and a new menu will shortly be introduced. A website upgrade is also due to go live shortly. The cinema is increasing in popularity with ticket sales up on same time last year, with a new trial of combined tickets for food and beverage proving popular.

Open Air Theatre – the open air theatre will see improvements for the coming season with new bars currently being fitted out, VIP viewing platform, new staging, additional toilets and new water drinks dispensers installed to allow free water at all events.

Filey Brigg Caravan Site - work is underway installing the 29 new electric hook-ups. Easter was busy but did have some issues with waterlogged pitches. A new children's train and boat have been installed and proved popular with young children over Easter.

Filey Evron Centre – the Food Festival took place on 30 -31 March and was larger than previous years with 65 stalls. It was extremely busy both days with excellent feedback from the traders resulting in strong bookings for the next events.

Falsgrave Community Centre - The Fig Tree Arts Space launched on 27April. As part of the 'Scarborough Streets' a mural was painted on the centre by local children.

Beaches and chalets - RNLI Beach Lifeguard service commenced 4 May along the coast. The new South Bay chalets are nearing completion and are scheduled to be available from early summer.

Events - preparations continue for Armed Forces Day and the Fish and Ships Festival will take place in Whitby 18 and 19 May.

Housing

Affordable Homes - over the course of 2023/24, we have seen nearly 900 new affordable housing completions delivered across all parts of North Yorkshire, across all tenures and through a variety of delivery mechanisms including our own delivery, registered provider delivery and S106 units.

A few notable highlights have included the delivery of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) Round 2 to support the provision of permanent accommodation for households from the Afghan Refugee Resettlement Schemes. We were able to deliver 12 homes within budget across various parts of North Yorkshire by, in the main, acquiring ex-Right to Buy properties on the open market and bringing them up to a high standard. This successful approach has led to us being offered a higher allocation of funding in the next round of LAHF funding.

Through our enabling role, we have also worked closely with Karbon Homes and 54North to see the delivery of a 70 home, 100% affordable scheme in Thorpe Willoughby near Selby. The scheme has delivered a mix of rented homes and low cost home ownership, and has also utilised modern methods of construction including high levels of energy efficiency with insulation and use of air source heat pumps.

Through the Councils Housing Revenue Account we have also acquired 36 homes ourselves on a S106 site in Harrogate. These were a mix of social rented and shared ownership. The site was in a high value area, and ensured that much needed affordable housing was made available to local households in need.

In January we acquired 34 homes from Selby and District Housing Trust, bringing them into the Council's ownership account and securing their future provision as affordable homes. The properties based in Selby, Tadcaster, Ulleskelf and Riccall were funded using S106 off site affordable housing contributions and added to our Housing Revenue Account.

Housing Renewal

Home Improvement Agency - our new countywide handyperson service is now live with our team of handypersons working hard across the county to install minor adaptations on behalf of colleagues in Health and Adult Social Care and the NHS.

Healthy & Sustainable Homes Team - NYC have been bench-marked as a high performing authority in the delivery of the Home Upgrade Grant 2. We have now installed 46 energy efficiency measures and spent in the region of £1.1m and are on target to complete IRO 240 further measures during 2024/25 with a total spend of approximately £6m for the project. The Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 (HUG2) is available to help homes that are not on mains gas, have poor quality insulation and/or have inefficient heating systems

Council Housing

From April the Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) came into force. This new legislation enhances the consumer standards that the Council must comply with to ensure we provide safe homes and quality services for our tenants. The new legislation also increases the duties and powers of the Regulator for Social Housing.

Some of the requirements of the Act reflect previous standards but are enhanced or may become more specific, for example stock condition surveys. The updated requirement is not only for more frequent surveys, but for them to be undertaken both inside and out on every individual property.

Additionally, there are some completely new requirements such as an obligation to undertake tenant satisfaction surveys which will produce a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) for each organisation, these are to be submitted to the Regulator for Social Housing annually.

There are also some significant changes of emphasis. The most notable of these is the obligation to consider diverse needs and vulnerabilities of tenants. This involves holding and maintaining an up-to-date profile of our tenants, their needs and the suitability of our properties and services in delivering services to those tenants with diverse needs.

There is also a strong emphasis on transparency across all the themes, sharing performance and other information with tenants and wider stakeholders.

As well as enhancing consumer standards, the legislation places a statutory duty on the Regulator for Social Housing to undertake inspections of all social landlords every four years. These are quite similar to OFSTED-style inspections, with results and findings graded and published. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of 'co-regulation' with a duty placed on landlords to highlight to the Regulator any areas of non-compliance.

The introduction of the new legislation is challenging; however it is also very timely and positive for the new Council as we work to unify the three former district Council landlord services into one. Lots of groundwork has been done in advance of the new regulations coming into force, including a detailed gap analysis and self-assessment to help identify the areas where more work needs to be done, the development of an improvement framework and plan, the adoption by Council of a new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, full-service restructure, and the proposed introduction of new governance arrangement including new Member Scrutiny arrangements and a new framework for tenant engagement. The new legislation is helpful and provides us with a framework for introducing changes to our landlord services and we are actively engaging with the Regulator on our improvement planning.

Tenant Satisfaction - as a social landlord we are required to collect and report annually on our performance using a core set of defined measures called the Tenant Satisfaction Measures or TSMs for short. The first Tenant Satisfaction Survey has been undertaken. The survey gained 2241 responses and an overall satisfaction level of 70%. The survey demonstrated high levels of satisfaction among tenants in relation to home safety (73%) and repairs undertaken within the last 12 months (73%). However, some measures received satisfaction levels below 60%, these being the positive contribution made by NYC to the neighbourhood and how they listen to tenants' views and act upon them (both 55%), handling anti-social behaviour (50%) and just 29% are satisfied with the way complaints are handled. As this is the first TSM survey to be conducted it will form the baseline to compare future surveys against.

Our results have to be published and reported to the Regulator of Social Housing by 30 June and made widely known to our tenants so that they can hold us to account and compare our performance against every other social landlord.

COUNCILLOR SIMON MYERS