

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**15 May 2024**

### **STATEMENT OF THE LEADER**

#### **Mayoral Elections**

Last week we undertook the first county-wide election carried out by the new Council. Nearly 540 polling stations in a variety of venues, including village halls and village pubs, requiring 2000 polling staff to run them, in addition to 90,000 postal voters, and 500 staff required across 3 counting locations. A further 420 NYC employees were required to work on other election duties before and during the election and count. The election was run with City of York Council as well, with 5 of the 6 candidates from North Yorkshire, indeed 4 of the 6 being North Yorkshire Councillors.

The result puts into place almost the final piece of the Mayoral Combined Authority jigsaw, the person elected to chair the MCA. The final piece is the recruitment of the Chief Executive for the MCA, a process which has started with advertisements placed, but the interviews and selection on June 3rd could not rightfully occur until the Mayor is in post.

#### **Craven Museum**

Members will have been delighted to learn that Craven Museum has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Art Fund Museum of the Year Award 2024 – the world's largest museum prize. The North Yorkshire museum is part of the excellent Skipton Town Hall Cultural Hub and is run by our Culture & Archives Service. This small but mighty museum, and its rich collections, including an impressive Shakespeare First Folio is up against some serious competition – the National Portrait Gallery; Young V&A; Dundee Contemporary, and the Manchester Museum for the prestigious award. The winner will be announced on 10<sup>th</sup> July at a ceremony in the National Gallery in London. We hope the judges will be impressed by the accessibility to the community of this museum which sits at the heart of the community. I am pleased that NYC has been able to build on and carry forward the excellent investment started by the former Craven District Council. It is well worth a visit!

#### **Catterick Garrison Town Centre project**

Good progress has been made in the Catterick Garrison Town Centre scheme. The construction tender for the Catterick Garrison Town Centre scheme is in the process of being approved and we expect to award the contract in the near future. Technical designs are complete and are awaiting approval and good progress is being made on pre-commencement planning conditions. Due to ecological survey requirements prior to demolition it is estimated that there will be around a 3 month delay to the programme. However, the team are working to minimise any delays by the potential phasing of demolition with the main construction contract. A preferred artist has been selected, subject to contract which will be issued over the next couple of weeks. The quarterly return to DLUCH has been submitted to secure the next round of funding at the end of May.

## **Volunteers**

I have said many times that the success and well being of North Yorkshire, and its Council, lies in the commitment and support of our volunteers. There can't be many communities where there is not some form of volunteer activity occurring, be it large or very small. Indeed many of us in this Chamber are volunteers ourselves.

The NYC volunteer project **Team North Yorkshire** continues to run, with over 4300 volunteers engaging with and supporting 24 Council services, including such things as Youth Justice, Schools, Libraries, Major Incident Response, Countryside Access and Waste Reduction Education. A concerted publicity campaign under the banner of Team North Yorkshire has seen a significant rise in the number of people coming forward to find out more about volunteering. The Volunteer Coordinators Group meets regularly to provide a steer for the project, exploring how to maximise volunteer involvement in council services, for the benefit of our residents, but also to create a great volunteering experience for those who engage with NYC opportunities, ensuring that they are well supported and that we have effective and efficient processes in place to help them in their roles.

Presently the group are looking to map the many voluntary activities that take place outside of the Council, but support Council priorities and services, to see if further assistance is required. Supporting volunteering for those who may experience barriers to accessing volunteering opportunities continues to be explored by a project co-funded by Stronger Communities and the National Lottery. This is being led by Hambleton Community Action, and we continue to work closely with our commissioned infrastructure provider Community First Yorkshire on their activities including their volunteering directory, supporting organisations with recruitment and retention, and delivering training.

The national Volunteers Week will be staged next month from Monday June 3<sup>rd</sup> , to Sunday June 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **Foster Carers**

This is a particular and special group of volunteers. My colleague Janet Sanderson may want to say more about this, but I wanted to mention the fostering service's annual conference which was held on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April. The key theme was on Trauma Informed Approaches. A large number of Foster Carers, children and staff were in attendance to listen to the excellent speakers, but just as important to come together for informal discussions and sharing experiences. The next big event is Foster Care Fortnight on 13<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> May, celebrating moments that define fostering journeys both big and small, and aiming to raise the profile of this essential provision nationally. We are indebted to their commitment and the results they achieve.

## **Household Support Fund**

The fourth phase of the HSF, funded by the Department of Work & Pensions to support those most in need with rising costs of essential goods and services, ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March. In line with the expenditure guidelines, and the agreed eligibility framework, around 24,600 households across North Yorkshire received a direct award in the form of a shopping voucher, with a 95% redemption rate. This encompassed eligible families, pensioners and working age adult households, as well as those who missed out on other forms of national Cost of Living support.

In addition to this, supplementary funding was awarded to the HSF Energy Support Scheme, Money Advice and Benefits Advice Service, and Care Leavers.

HSF will continue for a fifth phase from April 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September. Members will recall that we also included an extra £1m in the budget for the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund

COUNCILLOR CARL LES