

North Yorkshire Council

Standards and Governance Committee

26 June 2024

Parish and Town Council Support

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive, Legal and Democratic Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the arrangements in place in Democratic Services to support Parish and Town Councils.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the creation of the Unitary Authority in April 2023 North Yorkshire Council (NYC) now has a number of responsibilities in relation to Parish and Town Councils in the North Yorkshire area.
- 2.2 Parish and Town Councils are separate legal entities to North Yorkshire Council and as such are responsible for their own general governance.

3.0 SUPPORT FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

- 3.1 There are currently 731 Parishes within North Yorkshire of differing and varying sizes and make up.
- 3.2 The responsibilities of North Yorkshire Council in relation to Parish and Town Councils, are to maintain Parish Council details (such as details of the clerk and members of the council), publish Councillors' registers of interests on the website, make temporary appointments to the council, make recommendations to North Yorkshire Council regarding community governance reviews and to consider and handle any complaints in relation to a breach of the relevant Code of Conduct for Members.
- 3.3 North Yorkshire Council has no jurisdiction to consider other complaints about a parish council e.g., about the way in which the parish council has or has not done something, or about particular parish council decisions. Parish Councils are local authorities in their own right, work to a different framework to North Yorkshire Council, and to their own standing orders and codes of conduct. As such, North Yorkshire Council has no responsibility for parish councils other than in relation to the matters identified in 3.2.
- 3.4 Where concerns are raised regarding the day-to-day management of the parish council these should be referred to Chair of the Parish Council or the Clerk. Support is also available for Parish and Town Councils via the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Yorkshire Local Councils Association (YLCA).
- 3.5 All Parish and Town Councils were encouraged to adopt North Yorkshire Council's Code of Conduct which is based on the Local Government Association's Model Code in an aim to

facilitate consistency across North Yorkshire and clarity for all regarding provisions which apply.

4.0 DEMOCRATIC SERVICES SUPPORT

4.1 Work has been underway in order to support Parish and Town Councils since the creation of the Unitary Authority.

4.2 A restructure in Democratic Services has created three Democratic Services Area Teams based on the Area Constituency Committee Boundaries across the County.

The East Team covers Scarborough and Whitby and Thirsk and Malton ACC areas.

The West Team covers Skipton and Ripon and Richmond ACC areas.

The Central Team covers Harrogate and Knaresborough and Selby and Ainsty ACC areas.

These teams support the Council's democratic process, committee meetings and Councillors. They also continue to provide ongoing democratic services as detailed in 4.3.

4.3 Within each of these Area Teams there is a lead Democratic Services Officer supporting Parish Councils and maintaining the information we hold on the website. This includes;

- Parish Clerk contact details
- Councillor details
- Vacancy details
- Recording of Register of Interest
- Chasing outstanding Register of Interests.

They will also be the first point of contact for any day-to-day enquiries from Parish Clerks. Concerns around the general operation need to be addressed by the Parish Council. North Yorkshire Council is not in a position to provide legal advice.

4.4 There is also a Local Area Support Team which will oversee this work, they will;

- Identify and record areas of concern and common issues & communicate actions and solutions accordingly
- Deal with any queries escalated from the Area Teams
- Arrange code of conduct and complaint training for Parishes
- Support the Standards and Governance Committee
- Manage temporary appointments
- Liaise with elections on vacancies/co-options
- Liaise regularly with the localities team
- The team consists of 3 Officers.

The Team also has responsibilities for member development, community governance reviews, the creation of a dedicated member page and the maintenance of outside bodies.

4.5 There is also support for Parish and Town Councils within the wider North Yorkshire Council structure with the Localities Team having a Parish Liaison and Local Devolution Manager and Officers. This team will look at the inward communication paths for Parish and Town Councils on all matters, focus on a specific Parish Liaison Network and re-introduce support for the Parish Charter amongst many other areas of locality focus.

Work is also underway through the new Community Partnership Pilots. The aim of this working group is to provide a strategic approach to improving some of the key challenges

experienced by many rural Parish Councils. There is also the need to develop a support network enabling Parish Councils to support each other.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications.

7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none.

9.0 CONCLUSION

9.1 North Yorkshire Council is prioritising the support it gives to Parish and Town Councils and Democratic Services are working to improve communications and the relationship it has with them. The focus is on the Democratic Service element but in conjunction with teams in other areas a more robust support system will be in place to support Parish and Town Councils.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the report.

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Background;
[Parish Charter | North Yorkshire Council](#)
[National Association of Local Councils \(nalc.gov.uk\)](http://nationalassociationoflocalcouncils.org.uk)
[Yorkshire Local Councils Associations \(yorkshirelca.gov.uk\)](http://yorkshirelocalcouncilsassociations.org.uk)

13 June 2024