

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

25 JULY 2024

STATEMENT OF COUNCILLOR HEATHER PHILLIPS, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Legal and Democratic Services

The migration of the historical committee papers from the former district and borough council committee management systems to the North Yorkshire Council Modern Gov system is near completion. This will enable members, officers and the public to review committee papers and minutes relating to all of the former district and borough councils in one place on the North Yorkshire Council website.

The School Admission Appeals Service has completed the administration of the bulk admissions appeals for primary and secondary schools ahead of the school holidays and the start of the September school term. The appeals are heard by an independent panel of volunteers, without whom the process could not be administered.

On 22 April 2024, the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities published updated statutory guidance. This new guidance refreshes that previously published in 2019. Scrutiny Board has reviewed the document and the issues raised, taking the opportunity for a high-level review or health check of the Council's scrutiny function. The outcome of this will inform future developments in scrutiny practice as the new scrutiny team is embedded following the restructure in February 2024.

An initial meeting of the internal Member Liaison Group on Councillor Safety has led to the identification of a number of actions and pilot pieces of work that can be undertaken to promote the safety of councillors as they go about their duties, either at formal committee meetings of the Council or in their division. This is in addition to ongoing briefings; circulation of information from the LGA, Electoral Commission and others; support with the installation of physical safety measures at home; and liaison with the Police. The safety of elected members is a key concern for the Council and critical to the delivery of the democratic process locally.

Localities Service

As part of the Council wider service restructures, the work to establish the new Localities Service structure has now completed. The new Localities Service went live on 1 May 2024 and is made up of three service teams:

- Communities (incorporating the work of the Public Health funded Stronger Communities Programme, voluntary and community sector funding, local partnerships, prevention, social regeneration and community resilience);
- Parish Liaison and Local Devolution (incorporating projects such as parish charter, parish liaison and engagement, service devolution pilots, community right to challenge and assets of community value); and
- Migrant Programmes (bringing together a number of existing refugee and asylum seeker programmes, Homes for Ukraine programme and other community-based support initiatives into a single team).

The teams have commenced reconfiguring workloads and will continue to be in liaison with Elected Members to support them in their community leadership role.

Communities

Community Anchor Organisations (CAOs)

The 25 place-based organisations from across the county continue to work with the Localities and other service teams to progress a Community Anchor model for North Yorkshire; in Q1, this included a review of the organisational development action plans and progressing prevention pilots with Health & Adult Services. The UKSPF funded collaborative support programme for CAOs, delivered by Community First Yorkshire (CFY) and Better Connect continues. It is tailored to meet the needs of each organisation and will broadly include the development and delivery of resources and training, one to one support meetings, partnership events and networking opportunities. Collaborative work with our key voluntary sector partners in our larger urban areas of Harrogate and Scarborough has concluded and an Anchor model has been identified for each, further work is taking place to develop the grant specification.

The small scale Inspire grants scheme has continued to run, with 50 awarded in the last quarter. The team has also continued to work alongside various voluntary and community groups to support organisational development and capacity building activity.

Community Partnerships

The team continues 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 in Elmet and Forest and Dale (Thornton-le-Dale and rural hinterland). A progress report is scheduled to be considered by the Executive in September.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

Localities continue to take the lead role in the delivery of the Communities strand of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme. An advisory group is in place made up of public and voluntary sector partners, who are overseeing the delivery of the work being progressed on the year one and two allocations, as well as over-seeing year three allocations. Notable progress has been made in the following areas:

- The Community Grants fund has made 30 awards to date, representing £520,000 worth of investment. This fund is now closed to new applications.
- The Village Halls and Community Buildings Grant fund closed in Q1. It has awarded £815,000 worth of investment into a range of valued local community assets. A total of 33 awards have been made over the two years, with 15 awarded in Q1 this year.
- The Physical Activity, Sport and Active Travel Fund continues to be successfully delivered by North Yorkshire Sport on behalf of the Council after its launch in autumn 2023. This programme is also now fully allocated with 57 organisations receiving a total of £725,000 of funding. In addition, 8 projects have received a total £450,000 for large scale works via the capital grants fund.
- The Digital Inclusion Fund was launched in April 2024. The ambition for the investment is to stimulate digital inclusion activity through learning, skills, resources, and volunteering, in a range of existing and new settings targeting digital and health inequalities. The funding comprises of

£200,000 capital grants fund and £336,000 revenue budget for digital learning and skills. The first phase of awards has completed awarding 16 grants with a total value of £180,435. A digital inclusion support package for successful applicants is currently being finalised and procured and the fund re-opened for new applications on 5th July 2024.

Local Food Support

Following the 'Food Summit' - a partnership and engagement event to launch the findings of the collaborative food insecurity insight study undertaken in conjunction with City of York Council in September 2023 - four online Community of Practice sessions have now taken place with local free or low cost food providers, focussing on place based collaborative food access models, cash/income first approaches, more than food (wrap around support available for those accessing food provision) and mixed income models. A number of dedicated key stakeholder conversations continue to take place in relation to this work, including with colleagues in Public Health as they continue to develop the North Yorkshire Food Strategy.

Wider Partnership Conference and Community Awards

The annual Partnership Conference will take place on Friday 25th October at the Pavilions of Harrogate. The theme of this year's conference is around 'Responding to Change'. Nominations for the annual Community Awards have opened, the categories this year are:

- Best Community Group
- Best Community Project
- Lifetime Achievement in Volunteering

The Awards will be presented at the Conference.

Parish Liaison & Local Devolution

Work has been progressing on the commitment to review the Parish Charter and a meeting has taken place with the Parish Charter working group in May with a further meeting planned for October/November. The agreements in the Charter are being worked through and an action plan developed that sets out the detail required to monitor these commitments. Once this has been finalised it will also inform other work currently being developed including improved contact with the Council, Parish Council communication/engagement generally, baseline performance measures and the opportunity for the Parish sector to provide regular feedback. Some particular areas of work are :

- Area based Parish Liaison meetings
- Area based drop-ins - themed and general discussion opportunities
- Regular informal engagement with representative Parish meetings/councils
- Opportunities for shared training and development

This work is at an early stage, but the intention is that the Parish Charter forms the framework for Parish Liaison generally and that there is an action plan developed that sets out the ongoing and future requirements with measures to monitor progress and demonstrate improvement.

Migrant Programmes

Homes For Ukraine

Between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024, there were 35 new arrivals (6 children and 29 adults) in North Yorkshire through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This is in addition to the 1501 arrivals, since the start of the scheme to the end of 2023/24.

Visas are now granted for an 18 month period, whereas earlier arrivals were granted 3 years. There is the option for a further 18 month extension, which Ukrainians can apply for three months before their current visa expires.

Wrap around support including a dedicated information telephone line, financial packages to support people with housing, employability support, adult learning and community integration continues to be provided.

Economic Migrants

Progress is ongoing to develop a Lottery funded countywide programme of support for economic migrants building on the successful POMOC programme that operates in the former Scarborough and Ryedale areas and supports migrants to access services and to contribute meaningfully to social and civic life.

Resettlement

As of 30 June 2024, North Yorkshire has resettled 397 persons (80 households) under the Afghan resettlement schemes (since August 2021). From that figure, 30 persons (six households) have moved out of county. During Q1 2024/25 37 individuals from eight households have started their resettlement journey in North Yorkshire.

The United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) is a scheme that can be used for the UK to respond to refugee crises anywhere in the globe and has been operational in North Yorkshire since February 2021. To date 175 people (45 households) have been resettled in North Yorkshire. There were no arrivals through this scheme during Q1 2024/25.

Integration support for the resettlement schemes arrivals continues to be provided in partnership with the Refugee Council with initial tenancy support being provided by North Yorkshire Council's dedicated refugee housing officers.

Asylum

The Migrant Programmes Team is in regular contact with Mears, the organisation contracted by the Home Office to find dispersal housing in Yorkshire and Humber, to identify potential suitable sites across the county. Two hotels, one in Northallerton and one in Selby, currently accommodate families and single males respectively.

Councillor Locality Budgets

The tenth year of the scheme started on 13 May 2024 and the last date for the receipt of recommendations will be 31 January 2025. Members are able to make recommendations totalling £10,000 and the arrangements are as in previous years with the addition that funding will not be

awarded for 100% of the cost of a project or activity undertaken or managed by an external organisation. External organisations are expected to meet a proportion of the cost of projects or activities from their own funds or from a funder other than North Yorkshire Council. Councillors are also required to round down their awarded funding to the nearest £10.

177 recommendations have been made to date, amounting to £172,160 (19.13%) of the allocated funding.

Customer, Revenue and Benefits Service

As part of the Council wider restructure, Customer, Revenue and Benefits have completed staff consultation on the new structures and have moved to the next stage of implementation. The new teams will be crucial in the delivery of the Council Plan, Customer Experience Strategy, and Customer Transformation Programme.

Household Support Fund (HSF) 5 – Q1 Update

A fifth phase of the Household Support Fund was launched in Q1 and will run until 30 September 2024. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded programme aims to support those most in need or crisis with rising living costs.

In line with the expenditure guidelines and the agreed eligibility framework and delivery plan, c21,500 households across North Yorkshire will receive a direct award in the form of a £140 shopping voucher to support them over the summer months. This will encompass eligible families, pensioners and working age adult households, who were in receipt of maximum Council Tax Reduction (CTR) as of 1 June 2024. In addition to this, funding has been awarded to:

- North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF), enabling the maximum number of awards for emergency food and utilities to remain at four over a 12-month rolling period until 30 September 2024.
- The provision of an Energy Support Scheme, delivered by North Yorkshire Citizens Advice & Law Centre until 30 September 2024.
- Food Support: a grants scheme for providers of free or low-cost food was launched in Q1, with 25 awards made to increase capacity in the system until 30 September 2024.
- Cost of living support for Care Leavers via the NYC Care Leavers Team.
- An Exceptional Circumstances Fund will be delivered, to support those who may have missed out on direct award support due to circumstances beyond their control throughout the time period the direct award is live (24 June 2024 - 5 August 2024).

North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF)

In Q1, 2024/25, 3,044 applications were received¹ with an 89% approval rate. A total of £351,849.41 was spent², with 39% on food and energy vouchers, and 61% on standard awards.

.Quarterly data update:

- On average, NYLAF received 234 applications a week this quarter.

¹ Compared to 3,112 applications received and the 2,858 approved in Q1, 2023/24

² Compared to £378,393.71 spent Q1, 2023/24.

- There have been 318 first time applicants to the Fund this quarter.
- Vulnerability category data is also monitored monthly. It shows no *significant* change in who is being supported through the scheme and in which geographical areas, with those experiencing mental health challenges (20%) and those homeless (13%) coming through the Fund more than anyone else. For the first time ever, however, this Quarter, NYLAF received the same % of applications from those with 1 or more physical disabilities (5%) as families under extreme pressure.

Other key areas of note this quarter include:

- As well as the reported figures above, further food parcels were delivered across the Scarborough town area through our ongoing partnership with the Rainbow Centre. In Q1, 294 were delivered.
- NYLAF has supported the Governments Homes for Ukraine Scheme, with 27 awards going to refugees or host families this quarter to directly support those that have fled Ukraine.

Customer Service

In our first year operating as one customer service team we have supported:

- 650,566 customers over the phone
- 80,951 customer face to face
- 186,382 customer e-mails enquiries
- 34,393 enquiries generated from the website "get in touch" link.

In total that **952,292** customers supported across our 8 customer service teams

In Q1 the top demand through the customer service team have been:

- Bin's, Recycling and waste
- Council Tax
- Housing and homelessness
- Roads, Parking and Travel
- Social Care

In Q1 the customer services team have assisted the elections team to deliver the two elections. The team supported elections through handling their phone calls at first point of contact, providing face to face resource to help elections check ID for both residents and staff, and released resource to help deliver the election on both polling day and the count. Overall, in Q1 the customer services team received 5,724 calls for Elections and saw an increase in footfall by 622 customers for election related enquiries.

The team have also supported the roll out of the household support scheme, and council tax reminders, as well as business as usual.

COUNCILLOR HEATHER PHILLIPS