

# **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

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

## **Leisure and Culture**

### **Venues and Attractions**

Scarborough Spa has recently hosted a number of sell out events including Punk Fest Weekend, Fortress Festival Weekend and two Paul Smith comedy nights. All have rebooked for next year and are already selling fast.

The first show of the 2024 Open Air Theatre season started on 2 June with Status Quo performing to over 7,000 people. This will be followed by artists including Simple Minds, Anne-Marie, Deacon Blue, Tom Jones and Johnny Marr, with 18 concerts in total this season.

The second Filey Food Festival of 2024 took place in June, with almost 10,000 visitors and with excellent feedback from stall holders and visitors over the weekend.

Armed Forces Day has added another flying display to the programme with the Aerial Stunt Team, the Titans, booked to attend. Seafest took place 19-21 July. Fish and Ships in Whitby took place on 18 and 19 May and received fantastic feedback and the team are looking to grow the event in 2025 with great support this year from local business and the fishing community.

### **Sport and Active Wellbeing**

Aquanatal, a new class for pregnant women, is being offered at Northallerton Leisure Centre. The Centre is working in partnership with the South Tees NHS Foundation Trust to support the health and wellbeing of the community by providing accessible activities. The sessions are being led by qualified midwives from James Cook University and the Friarage Hospitals and include pool and studio-based sessions of exercises, relaxation and education.

FEAST gives eligible children and young people in North Yorkshire the opportunity to book onto school holiday activities for free, where each day they will also receive a free hot meal or packed lunch. Following a successful trial in the Christmas holidays at Northallerton Leisure Centre, sessions will again be delivered during the summer holidays at both Northallerton Leisure Centre and Stokesley Leisure Centre with young people able to participate in swimming and other games and activities.

### **Libraries**

The Local and Community History Month throughout May saw libraries across North Yorkshire celebrate all that is great about our local communities by holding activities and events to get people interested in the history of their area. This included a collaboration with the Archives Service to deliver a series of 'pop up' archive sessions in Pickering, Selby, Settle, Easingwold and Harrogate Libraries. A highlight was a talk in partnership with Dr Tosh Warwick of the University of Sheffield who played to a packed crowd at Scarborough Library uncovering the "Lost Football Grounds of Yorkshire".

The service was pleased to be recognised nationally at the Libraries Connected annual awards where some of our staff and volunteers were shortlisted for projects in the Culture and Creativity category. This included recognition for the multimedia immersive exhibition 'More Than a Name on a Memorial'.

Also shortlisted was the Ey Up! project. Ey Up! came from a seed of an idea when working with the University of Leeds Dialect for Local and Community History Month 2022 and resulted in libraries making lasting connections with partners, volunteers, funders, artists, film makers and participants from hard-to-reach groups. The Ey Up! project was awarded the runner up prize in the awards with the judges describing the project as 'powerful' and 'emotive' and were particularly impressed by the team's centralised approach to fundraising.

Volunteers' Week 3-9 June 2024 provided an excellent opportunity for libraries and the wider Council to celebrate the significant contribution volunteers make all year round in delivering public services and making North Yorkshire a better place to live. Libraries in Catterick, Harrogate and Pickering hosted Volunteers Week drop-in events organised by the Resourcing Solutions team, providing a chance for all volunteers who support Council services to meet up, enjoy light refreshments and meet and receive recognition from the Council Chair, Cllr Roberta Swiers. Twenty-four volunteers attended the three events and very much enjoyed socialising with volunteers from other services. Many libraries (both NYC and community-managed) held their own celebration events to recognise their volunteers.

Dementia Collections, a new collection of books to help people living with dementia, was launched at Bentham Library on 17 May to coincide with Dementia Awareness Week and is now available in libraries across North Yorkshire. The books provide information, advice and support as well as personal stories aimed at those with dementia and their families, including the younger generation.

### **Culture and Archives**

Selby Place Partnership Fund Project is now underway following the successful launch of the 'We Are Here' digital art installation that previewed at Selby Abbey on 6 June. 'We Are Here' is the first of many creative community place-based programmes as part of the 2-year project, which aims to install civic pride, tell the stories of communities and regenerate the towns of Selby, Tadcaster and Sherburn in Elmet.

Craven Museum has had fantastic coverage in the local and national media as one of five shortlisted museums for the coveted Arts Fund Museum of the Year 2024. The award ceremony is in July, where the winner will be announced.

Archives at Dusk, the annual event to encourage more audiences to find out more about the archives service, and encourage communities to engage with their heritage, took place at North Yorkshire Archives on 23 May. Over 200 people came through the doors for the latest exhibition. 'Treasures from the Parish Chest: exploring North Yorkshire's church history from archives to architecture' and around half of attendees were first time visitors.

Work continues to develop the new Cultural Strategy for North Yorkshire and York, with a range of consultation events and meetings scheduled throughout the summer.

### **Housing**

#### **Selective Licensing Scheme**

The new Selective Licensing scheme in Scarborough, covering parts of the Castle, Northstead and Falsgrave and Stepney council divisions went live on 1 June. Up to the end of June a total of 143 applications had been received. With the Early Bird discount scheme coming to an end

at the end of August, officers will be sending out reminders to landlords to get applications in as soon as possible, to ensure they benefit from the discount. In total, it is envisaged that around 1,000 licences will be issued based on the number of private rented properties known to be within the designated area.

### **Rural Housing Enablers**

Our rural housing enablers are working hard paving the way for the delivery of affordable rural housing. Two Housing Needs surveys were recently completed in the Escrick/Riccall and Kelfield as well as in Newton Kyme/Billborough both of which have identified need for affordable housing. They are now working with the communities and partners to bring forward rural exception sites. Their work is also paying off with several schemes having obtained planning permission. These include an affordable housing scheme for 20 homes in Swinton near Malton on a rural exception site as well as an affordable rural scheme of 58 homes in Amotherby (near Malton). Further work with several communities and landowners is on-going and we are expecting this to result in further rural exception delivering affordable homes in our rural areas.

The rural enablers were at the Great Yorkshire Show on 10 July, sharing a stand with the Country Land and Business Association. This included a round table discussion to understand what would incentivise landowners to bring sites forward for rural affordable housing.

### **HUG 2**

The Home Upgrade Grant 2 project is available to help off gas residents improve the energy efficiency of their homes, offering insulation, solar PV and renewable heating systems. The project is progressing well with installations exceeding the monthly targets for Year 2. We have now installed 231 measures to 121 properties, with many properties benefitting from multiple measures. We have spent just over £2m and are on target to achieve the project target of 250 properties with a total spend of approximately £6m. The project has created approximately £1.9m in lifetime savings over all properties, with each household saving an average of £639 per property per year. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero have indicated that further monies will be made available should we be in a position to install additional properties over and above the current targets.

### **Digital Switchover – Lifeline Services**

The Public Switched Telephone Network will be retired by Openreach by January 2027. Landline calls will then be delivered over digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) which uses a broadband connection. The change will affect all third party devices that rely on a phone line. This includes critical equipment like telecare and fire alarms.

The responsibility for communicating with residents is with the communications providers, with an expectation that they have provision for people who could be made vulnerable by the switch. This can be anyone who is reliant on their landline, for example, telecare users, those without a mobile signal or without a mobile phone or those who are at risk of power cuts (as the new digital lines do not carry power).

This is a concerning topic for many people, but we have working with our lifeline customers to mitigate any risk to the efficiency of their lifeline equipment. This includes working with the main communications providers to ensure a joined-up approach in North Yorkshire. We have data sharing agreements in place to identify all of our service users and ensure the digital switch is seamless for them.

We have been chosen to take part in BT's Digital Voice Telecare pilot trial, the aim of which is to work closely with service providers. This pilot will switch a handful of users to Digital Voice and our lifeline operators are going to be physically working with these engineers during the migration in order to provide the telecare expertise and to ensure our customers remain connected should the migration encounter any issues.

### **Housing Advice and Homelessness approaches**

North Yorkshire's Housing Needs team have assisted a total of 5422 households with Housing Advice or assistance in 2023/24, of which 2582 applied as homeless or were at risk of homelessness. In 48% of these cases the homelessness was prevented or relieved quickly, before a main long term housing duty decision was made, for example resolving rent arrears, budgeting difficulties, family mediation or accessing alternative accommodation. During the process some cases disengage, some are not classed as homeless or in priority need after investigations. We accepted a statutory housing duty in 500 cases.

### **Temporary Accommodation**

As of 31 March 2024 there were 240 households in temporary accommodation provided under homeless legislation, which consisted of 139 in council-owned or registered provider-procured accommodation and 101 in bed and breakfast or other high cost emergency accommodation. This number has fluctuated between 200 and 240 households at the end of quarter counts over the last 12 months. Going forward we will not only be looking to reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation, but through the development programme, look at the type of temporary accommodation being used and reducing the need for as many emergency bed and breakfast placements.

### **Approval of Business cases for the development of temporary accommodation**

The team are excited about the prospect of an additional 90 temporary accommodation units across North Yorkshire, including a purpose-built supported accommodation project for homeless customers. This will reduce time spent in bed and breakfast for households, provide much better accommodation and reduce costs for the council. We are hoping to get this moving as soon as possible, starting in Scarborough.

### **BEAM**

The Housing Options Teams are excited to begin a pilot with BEAM Ltd, an organisation set up to help people who are in temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation and employment. The pilot will provide assistance to 27 households across North Yorkshire and will focus on those homeless in temporary accommodation. BEAM Ltd have developed significant relationships across North Yorkshire and this enables them to offer employment and support opportunities not openly available to many of our service users. The housing options team look forward to seeing some favourable outcomes.

### **Other news**

Cook and Eat sessions at Fern House, Harrogate are proving to be a great success with residents learning how to cook a nutritious meal whilst enjoying interactions with other residents. The sessions started with just a couple of the residents, but the numbers are growing and the sessions are fast becoming a highlight of the week.

Food is generously donated by the Harrogate Convention Centre following a menu plan drawn up each week by the residents. They are shown how to prepare the food and work together to produce a tasty lunch that they then sit down and share together. So far they have made pizza, curry, sausage and mash, chili con carne and shepherd's pie!

COUNCILLOR SIMON MYERS