

# NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

26 February 2025

## STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, ARTS & HOUSING

### Culture and Arts

#### Culture

The North Yorkshire Cultural Strategy was launched on 13 December at an event in Malton attended by over 100 representatives of communities and creative/cultural sector from across the county and received an excellent response in local and regional press. This month also saw the launch of the first North Yorkshire Culture monthly newsletter, rounding up news, opportunities, funding information, training and learning resources for the creative, cultural and heritage sectors.

Our museum and galleries' national profile continues to build, this time with the loan of a significant artwork central to an exhibition at the Royal Academy. *The Scarecrow* by Cândido Portinari, from the Mercer Gallery collection has gone to the Royal Academy for their latest exhibition *Brasil! Brasil! The Birth of Modernism*. The piece is prominently displayed with details of the loaning gallery – getting the name of one of our excellent museums and galleries across to national audiences.

Admissions to Knaresborough Castle are up by 156% from 2023, largely credited to a redeveloped family activity space in the museum, and the reinstatement of sallyport tours at the medieval castle heritage site.

The Scarborough Lights during November and December 2024 was the second of the annual light festivals taking place across Scarborough. There were over 50 individual light installations and events in 44 locations. Highlights were the South Cliff Fire Garden, Reflections at St Mary's Church and The Aquarium of Light at the Spa, as well as free displays and installations. There were also illuminations in Peasholm Park, at Scarborough Castle, St Mary's Church and shopfronts across the town centre. There were also 24 streets involved in Scarborough's Live Advent Calendar. Audience data is still being collated, but was well in excess of 150,000, with ticketed attendances at 7,000. Social media reach for festival posts was approximately 1 million views.

Scarborough Fair dates for 2025 -

30 May-1 June	Scarborough Streets
13-22 June	Scarborough Fringe
5 July-3 August	Scarborough Art
12-14 July	Scarborough Extreme
14 November-21 December	Scarborough Lights

#### Venues and Events

The Panto at Scarborough Spa, this year featuring Anne Hegarty from TV's *The Chase*, was a huge success with sales far exceeding any previous panto's at the Venue. Whitby Pavilion had an extremely busy December, including nearly 2,000 people attending the Cinema.

Following on from a successful 2024 season for the Scarborough Open Air Theatre with the most acts and tickets sold, 2025 is shaping up to be bigger. There are now 17 confirmed acts for 2025 with further negotiations ongoing.

## **Libraries**

Early Years outreach : During the last quarter library staff have been busy delivering Bookstart Preschool packs to 3–4-year-olds in more disadvantaged areas across the county, to encourage shared reading and promote library services. Since October, we have visited 98 preschool settings and delivered 1794 packs to children who may not otherwise have any books at home.

Get Online Week : Libraries participated in the annual promotion of digital inclusion in October 2024. This included digital support sessions in libraries, bingo cards to encourage people to try something new online, Storytimes with Code-a-Pillar for under-fives and the launch of a new monthly Digital Café at Scarborough Library.

Thirsk are also hosting a Digital Café on the first Saturday of each month after a successful UKSPF bid and had a launch event in November.

Slipper Socials : A successful bid to the Arts Council has enabled our libraries to deliver another series of Slipper Socials. At the same time as picking up a pair of free anti-slip slippers to help with falls prevention, library customers have been able to learn about age-appropriate exercises and get advice on how to stay well and safe. Northallerton, Skipton, Pickering, Filey and Whitby libraries have recently hosted events, gifting 401 pairs of slippers. Five more libraries will host events over the next few weeks.

Self Care Week : In November, libraries marked Self Care Week and worked with partners including Age UK, Sport and Active Wellbeing, Living Well and Alzheimer's Society to provide 59 events across the county, attended by over 700 people.

## **Leisure**

### **Active North Yorkshire**

Let's Talk Active : The Let's Talk Active campaign was extremely successful and engaged with over 3200 people. This survey will inform the Leisure Investment Strategy and increase our understanding about what residents need from their local leisure facilities and how we can help more people to be active at all stages of life. The final report has been published and all ACs are receiving informal updates for Members.

Healthy You : On 1 January 2025 the previous Public Health-commissioned adult weight management service was successfully transferred into the Sport and Active Wellbeing service and is now named Healthy You. The new model is weight neutral and now more lifestyle focused and includes the enhancement of the offer to young people and families.

FEAST : This Christmas the focus was on family swim sessions and lunch. Targeted sessions were also delivered for young adults in the Harrogate area, offering gym and lunch sessions. The sessions were positively received, participants were enthusiastic to learn and there were one or two who signed up to membership afterwards. We will be continuing to provide FEAST sessions across North Yorkshire into 2025 and offer activities within more areas of the county.

Selby Leisure Centre Solar PV : Work commenced in January on the installation of 216 solar panels at Selby Leisure and Wellbeing Hub. This follows from the successful bid of Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund. The solar panels will support in offsetting approximately 13% of the leisure centre electricity usage alongside allowing us to operate more cost effectively and whilst helping to reduce the council's carbon footprint.

QUEST : During September and October last year sites at Bedale, Northallerton, Stokesley and Thirsk & Sowerby went through a vigorous 2-day Quest Plus assessment. We have now received the outcome of these four assessments and are proud to say that, even though we have been operating through a period of significant transformation, all sites have been awarded 'Very Good' with several areas of excellence identified throughout the assessments. An improvement action plan is currently in development to ensure we continue to improve service provision.

As part of plans to bring all centres into Active North Yorkshire the service is working towards bringing Richmondshire Leisure Trust in-house from 1 March 2025. Preparations are going to plan and it is expected the target date will be met. This follows the successful transition of both Selby Leisure and Brimham's Active during 2024.

## **Housing**

### **Homelessness**

The Council continues to see a high level of demand from those approaching for assistance, although the number of approaches and homelessness assessments has reduced compared to the previous quarter, 62% of those receiving a homeless assessment were actually homeless as opposed to at risk of homelessness, which is a slight improvement on the previous quarter.

### **Numbers in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation**

As at the end of December 2024 there were 252 households in temporary accommodation, with 79 of these in B&B, 30 in holiday lets and 143 in longer term general temporary accommodation. This is an increase by 1 on the previous quarter, but a reduction of those in B&B and holiday lets.

The first 6 additional temporary accommodation units that have been purchased in Scarborough are now occupied by families. Another 5 homes are due to come into the Council's ownership in October 2025. This provides excellent good quality accommodation to reduce the number of families being housed in expensive short-term accommodation. A further 8 homes for temporary accommodation are in the pipeline and due to become available for occupation in the next few months, bringing the total to 19 homes for temporary accommodation.

### **Rough sleeping North Yorkshire**

The team are working hard to identify those customers rough sleeping across North Yorkshire developing robust pathways to get them off the streets. Whilst numbers have increased in all areas, we have seen greater pressures in Scarborough with an influx of rough sleepers from out of area. To reflect this, measures were put in place December 2024 to address issues with unauthorised encampments with a multi-agency approach adopted with the enforcement teams, police and rough sleeper teams. This ensures that correct levels of support are provided to manage those displaced. This month in Scarborough we have positively seen 7 customers successfully rehoused into appropriate accommodation with the provision of ongoing in-house support. Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) has been activated many times since November 2024 to reflect the erratic weather we have been experiencing, and the team are working to find more viable accommodation options in all areas. The provision of interim accommodation allows the team to adopt a robust approach to engagement, working with the customer and partners to deliver focussed outcomes.

The government have released additional funding to North Yorkshire to reflect the need to ensure the safety of this customer group and this will greatly assist our approach.

## **Funding for Warm Homes and Disabled Facilities**

We are currently awaiting news on the allocation of Warm Homes funding, which could provide up to £27 million for a three-year project to carry out energy efficiency measures to low-income households in the private sector. Additionally, we have seen an increase in our Disabled Facilities Grant allocation, allowing us to deliver more support to people who need adaptations in their homes. The Council also continues to perform well in the delivery of existing Home Upgrade Grant and has been held up as an example nationally. In January, working with Align the Council hosted a showcase visit from Salix who support the funding of this area.

## **Tenant Involvement**

In December we launched our new magazine for tenants called 'Open Door'. The Open door will be produced quarterly and will be sent to all North Yorkshire Council tenants and leaseholders. The magazine allows us to share tenant stories, performance information and gives tenants information on future opportunities for involvement.

The results of our Q3 tenant satisfaction survey had some promising results and of those surveyed, 70% were satisfied with the overall service provided by North Yorkshire Council. We are working through the areas of dissatisfaction in detail to understand where our priorities need to be for improvement.

Our new Tenant Involvement Strategy was created with tenants and is still out for consultation. We have exciting plans for the next 12 months that will involve our tenants in transparent and meaningful engagement that supports the delivery of service improvements across the service and, importantly, reassure tenants that they are at the heart of our decision-making.

COUNCILLOR SIMON MYERS