

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

12 November 2025

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Legal and Democratic Services

The chairs and vice chairs of the area committees met recently to go through what works and what could be done differently or better. Best practice was shared, peer support and challenge provided and aspirations for the future identified. It is recognised that the area committees play a key role in the new council as the local engagement/access route for many organisations, partners and local people seeking to raise issues of concern. They also provide a platform for local members to engage with the MPs and the Mayor of York and North Yorkshire. The area committees will develop over time, and it will be interesting to see how they fit with the plans for Neighbourhood Governance that have been outlined in the Devolution Bill.

The Member Liaison Group on Councillor safety continues to meet and identify and implement good practice that promotes the safety of councillors as they go about their day-to-day business. This includes: a pot of funding for physical safety measures, such as motion activated lighting, CCTV and locks for the family home; access to the PeopleSafe App on smart phones; support from the Police, the Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services; access to wellbeing services; and the provision of security at committee meetings where protest and/or disruption is anticipated. Councillor contact details can also be removed from the website, where it is felt that there is potential for them to be targeted due to their work as a councillor.

There has been a steady increase in public participation in the Council's committees recently. In addition to petitions submitted that have reached the threshold for consideration at an area committee meeting, more public questions and statements have been submitted, covering topics such as: home to school transport; local plans; Richmond swimming pool; Whitby Cliff lift; air quality; fostering and adoption; the A61 and crime statistics. This engagement in our committees is to be welcomed and encouraged and highlights the interest in the decisions that the Council makes.

Localities

North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF)

In Quarter Two, 2025/26:

- 2,713 applications were received with an 91% approval rate
- A total of £291,471.67 was spent, with 42% on food and energy vouchers, and 58% on standard awards
- In keeping with previous years, the highest levels of demand are seen in Scarborough (972 applications, 36%), followed by Harrogate, with lowest levels of demand in Richmondshire (107 applications, 4%)

Table One: Current quarter figures against two time periods. Last quarter, and the same period 12 months prior. The down arrow icon highlights where current figures are reduced against both comparator time periods.

	Quarter One 2025/26 (last quarter)	Quarter Two 2024/25 (Quarter Two, 12 months ago)	Quarter Two 2025/26 (current)
Food voucher	1,910	2,257	1,402 ↓
Clothing voucher	56	112	102
Energy voucher	1,018	1,195	963 ↓
White goods	253	306	293
Cash awards	0	0	0

	Quarter One 2025/26 (last quarter)	Quarter Two 2024/25 (Quarter Two, 12 months ago)	Quarter Two 2025/26 (current)
Other household items	142	184	154
Furniture	264	340	233 ↓

Quarterly data update:

- On average, NYLAF received 194 applications a week this quarter.
- There have been 207 first time applicants to the Fund this quarter.
- Vulnerability category data is also monitored monthly. It shows no *significant* change in who we are supporting through the scheme and in which geographical areas, with those experiencing mental health challenges (470 applications, 17%) and those homeless (416 applications, 15%) coming through the Fund more than anyone else.

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 Quarter Two, 216 were delivered.
- NYLAF has also supported the Governments Homes for Ukraine Scheme, with 12 awards going to refugees or host families this quarter to directly support those that have fled Ukraine.

Customer

Customer Service

The top five demands for the Customer Service function in quarter two by service area are:

- Bins, recycling and waste
- Roads, parking and travel
- Social care
- Housing and homelessness
- Revenues

The top five service areas have remained consistent over the last five quarters. However, it is important to note that Customer Service demand for revenues has significantly decreased following the changes to call routing implemented on Monday 23 June 2025.

As a result, **97.14% of calls were handled** in Quarter 2 2025/26, compared to **94.69%** in the same quarter of 2024/25. This improved performance likely contributed to a reduction in repeat calls, further decreasing overall demand on the call centre.

Performance by month for front line queues – percentage of calls answered in four minutes:

Month	Quarter Two 2024/25 percentage of calls answered in four mins	Quarter Two 2025/26 percentage of calls answered in four mins	Percentage difference in 2024/25 to 2025/26
July	90.42%	95.68%	+5.26%
August	90.04%	95.41% ⁵	+5.37%
September	92.65%	94.94%	+2.29%
Quarter Two Overall	91.03%	95.35% ⁵	+4.32%

Performance by month for front line queues – Average speed of answer (- difference is a quicker average, a + difference is a longer average)

Month	Quarter Two 2024/25 percentage average speed of answer (mm:ss)	Quarter Two 2025/26 percentage average speed of answer (mm:ss)	Percentage difference in 2024/25 to 2025/26 (mm:ss)
July	01:05	00:29	-00:36
August	01:07	00:32 ⁵	-00:35
September	00:54	00:35	-00:19
Q2 Overall	01:02	00:32 ⁵	-00:30

Project and changes the Customer Service Team have helped facilitate are in the last quarter are:

Waste – four-day working

During Quarter Two, the Waste Service introduced changes to bin collection rounds in Hambleton and Scarborough, transitioning to a four-day working week. The changes were implemented on:

- 21 July in Hambleton
- 22 September in Scarborough

The Customer Service Team supported over 72,000 residents affected by the changes. Thanks to strong collaboration between the Waste Service, Digital Team, Communications and Customer Services, the rollout was smooth, and demand was lower than anticipated.

Waste also issued 5,000 letters to residents in Harrogate who will have their bin rounds changed again from 7 October 2025 due to lessons learnt from the four-day waste roll out in the area in April.

Elections – annual canvass

The annual canvass is always live over the Quarter Two period of each year, this is a communication that is issued to residents to check household details. The Customer Service Team have helped the Elections service by handling calls at the front door. Over the annual canvass period Customer Services handled all 2,996 offered calls which is a 100% handling rate for this call queue.

Langdale Wildfire

The Langdale and Fylingdales wildfire had an impact on Customer Services from the week commencing 11 August 2025. On Friday 15 August there was an increase of calls from residents regarding the smell of smoke, the fire continued with road closures until Monday 1 September, where roads re-opened with speed restrictions, within this period customer services have been helping the keep residents informed when needed. The service also had an emergency line stood up on the phone lines to account for calls regarding the moors fire.

Revenues and Benefits System Convergence

We are pleased to share an important update on the convergence of our Revenues and Benefits service, which marks a significant step forward in improving the customer journey for our residents.

Through the implementation of a new, integrated system and the alignment of procedures across services, we have introduced a more consistent, accessible, responsive and easy-to-navigate experience for all customers. This transformation includes a refreshed website, clearer processes and a unified 'one front door' approach that ensures residents receive the same high-quality service regardless of how or where they make contact.

Phase One of this project has successfully introduced a consistent service model across all eight Customer Service Teams, allowing us to distribute customer demand more evenly and deliver services

more effectively. This convergence has also aligned the offer across Customer Services and Revenues and Welfare and Benefits, ensuring consistency across the area.

Customer Services now handle four key council tax call types – payment, direct debit, change of address, and single person discount – with all advisors trained to the same standard. In Quarter Two alone, Customer Services received 9,498 council tax calls, handling 99.89% of them, demonstrating the impact of this streamlined approach.

In addition, Welfare and Benefits achieved a call handling rate of 93.97%, and Revenues reached 93.90%, reflecting the dedication of our teams and the effectiveness of the new system.

The backlog resulting from the system merger relating to service requests received during May and June 2025 has now predominately been addressed by both the Revenues, and Welfare and Benefits services. Service demand remains high, but we want to reassure councillors and residents that our teams are working extremely hard to deal with the volume of work being received. We continue to prioritise the oldest claims first, and for Revenues, this means that if you have informed us of a change of address, it should now be updated.

We are also in regular contact with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), who have been reassured by our progress and confident that we are on track.

We hope councillors will appreciate the breadth and depth of this work, and the commitment shown by our teams to deliver a better, fairer, and more efficient service for all.

Welfare and Benefits Team:

Household Support Fund (HSF)

The seventh phase of HSF will deliver across both quarter three and quarter four. The DWP funded programme aims to support those most in need or crisis with significantly rising living costs in 2025/26. In line with the expenditure guidelines and the agreed eligibility framework and delivery plan, 26,270 households across North Yorkshire were identified for a direct award in the form of a £190 shopping voucher to support them over the winter months. The direct award redemption will run from the 8 October 2025 - 12 November 2025. This phase the eligible cohort criteria has been expanded to include residents who received 75% to 100% of council tax reduction as of 1 September 2025. The cohort continues to encompass families, pensioners and working age adult households.

Development Management and Enforcement

From 1 April until 30 September 2025 the service has determined 109 major, 793 minor, 1637 other and 12 county matter applications. In addition, the service has also dealt with a considerable number of other types of applications, including prior approvals, screening opinions, scoping reports, trees, hedgerows, discharge of conditions, telecommunications, etc. Performance for planning applications across all types continues to exceed statutory national targets. In addition, 1,308 planning enforcement cases have been closed since 1 April 2025 as the backlog of cases continues to be addressed, most notably in the former Scarborough and Ryedale areas.

Planning operations

Work on a single hosted planning system (One uniform) continues. This is an important project to help us deliver a more efficient and effective planning and Building Control service and provide greater consistency of customer service across the whole Council area.

We have successfully migrated across the former Harrogate locality into the new system. The remainder will transition across in a phased way. We anticipate the Scarborough migration will commence during November with the system live on 1 December 2025. Craven will follow in the New Year. In order to facilitate this work, we have to close down the system which will have a short-term impact on service

performance levels. We will be ensuring that appropriate communications are put out to our customers to raise awareness.

Locality budgets

The eleventh year of the scheme started in May 2025 and the last date for receipt of recommendations is 31 January 2026. Members are able to make recommendation totalling £5,000 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.

156 recommendations have been awarded to date; amounting to £98,054.00 (21.79%) of the allocated funding. Two members have fully spent their budget and there are over ten that have yet to submit any recommendations, with just over two months remaining of the scheme year. Members are asked to submit their recommendations as soon as possible in order to avoid a surge in last minute applications. Any recommendations not received by the deadline date will not be processed and any money not spent will be returned to the general working balance.

COUNCILLOR HEATHER PHILLIPS