

North Yorkshire Council

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 June 2026

Localities Update Report

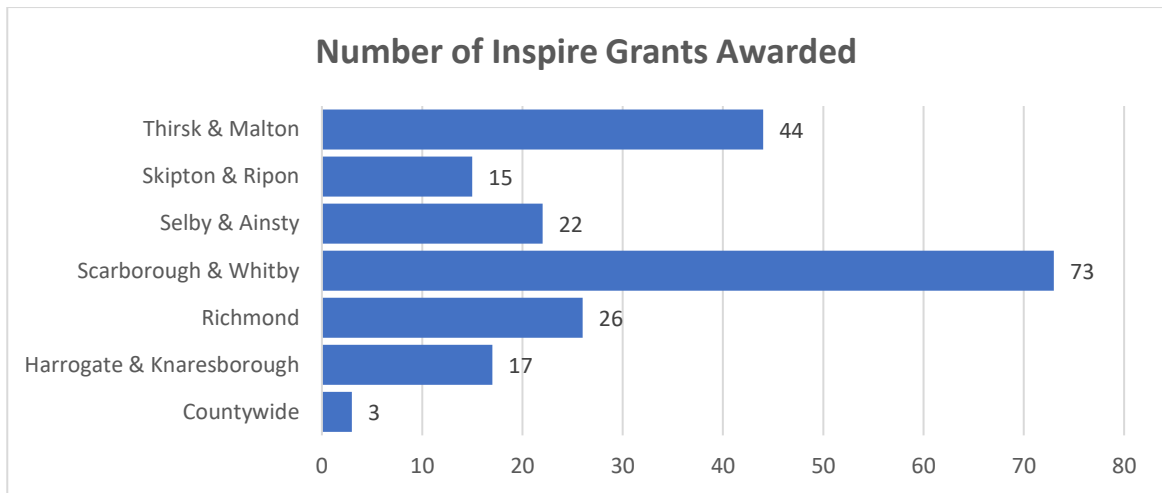
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive for Local Engagement

1.0 Purpose of Report

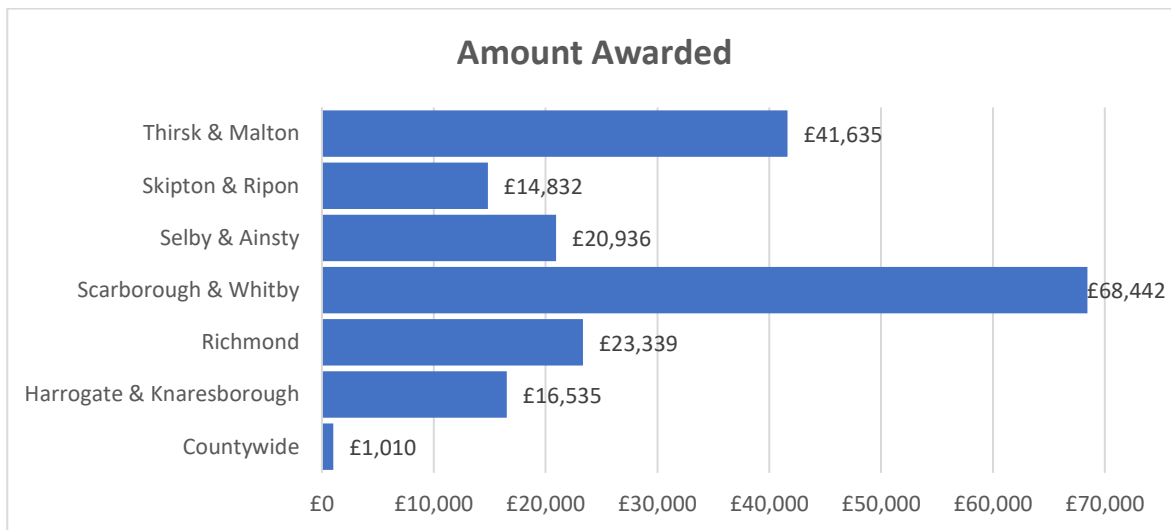
- 1.1 The report will update Members on projects and programmes undertaken by the Localities service and Corporate Volunteering over the last year.
- 1.2 The service is made up of three teams, Communities Team, Parish Liaison, Local Devolution and Community Rights Team and the Migrant Programmes Team.

2.0 Communities Team Update

- 2.1 The Communities Team work collaboratively with other services; communities; public sector; and voluntary and community sector partners to deliver the following aims:
 - i. Prevention – supporting communities to contribute to the Council and public health prevention priority to reduce, prevent or delay the point at which people need to access statutory health and social care services.
 - ii. Supporting people to live longer, healthier and independent lives within their community and contributing to broader public health priority to reduce health inequalities.
 - iii. Supporting communities to become more resilient to respond to local challenges.
 - iv. Social Regeneration – ensuring that the places where people live, now and in the future, create new opportunities, promote well-being and reduce inequalities so that people have better lives, in stronger communities and achieve their potential.
- 2.2 Stronger Communities Programme - Inspire Fund
This fund supports community and voluntary groups to establish new services, events or activities that promote social action and improve the wellbeing of individuals and communities.



2.3 In 2025/26: 200 Inspire grants worth £187,689.35 were awarded compared to 138 grants worth £131,568.50 in 2024/25.



2.4 Overall, the Inspire Fund appears to be meeting its objectives of supporting small, grassroots, community-led organisations from across the county with high proportions of volunteer-led groups and low staff numbers (61% had no employees). Most organisations depend heavily on volunteers (49% had between 1 and 10 volunteers and 39% had 11-50). Emerging groups were also able to access the funds, these formed 8% of awards.

2.5 These applications estimated that 2,333 volunteers would deliver 41,976 hours of volunteering as a result of this funding and would benefit 191,505 individuals.

2.6 Stronger Communities Programme – Achieve Together Fund

In addition to the small grass roots Inspire Fund, the programme also supports larger more established VCSE organisations with project funding for the development and delivery of services and activities that support the Council's objectives around improving health and wellbeing and building community resilience. The Achieve grants are available to organisations that have a track record in service delivery and support is offered for up to three years.

2.7 In 2025/26, two new Achieve projects were awarded a total of £28,614 for the development of a community-led children and families hub and an Ageing Well project.

- 2.8 Achieve Together - Community Anchor Organisations
The Achieve Together Fund also supports the network of place-based Community Anchor Organisations (CAO) across North Yorkshire. The Communities team continues to work with the network of CAOs and the number increased to 29 during 2025/26 as a new Anchor was awarded a grant in the Malton and Norton area.
- 2.9 Financial Inclusion
The team continue to lead and coordinate several work areas that are related to financial inclusion.
- 2.10 Local Food Support
Place based discussions continue with free or low-cost food providers in Scarborough, Harrogate and Richmond to explore opportunities to create place-based networks and work more collaboratively. Richmond embarked on a joint food procurement pilot in Q4.
- 2.11 The team also worked closely with the 29 Household Support Fund Support Grants recipients, focussing on the supply of free or low-cost food and essential supplies, and preventative activity over the winter period. The scheme, which closed on 31 March, has focussed on the supply of free or low-cost food and essential supplies, and preventative activity over the winter period. Currently, the team is developing the summer Community Food Bulletin; working with key partners to convene the next Community of Practice session; and scoping a potential capacity and capability building programme for community food provision.
- 2.12 Localities continue to work closely with Public Health to co-lead and develop the 'securing affordable and nutritious food for all' sub domain of the Food for the Future North Yorkshire framework.
- 2.13 North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF)
In 2025/26 £1.29m was spent on the crisis and standard awards, in addition £30k was spent on food parcels distributed by Rainbow Centre on behalf of NYLAF. Applications decreased by 9% compared to the previous year (11,300 applications received this year, down from 12,600).
- 2.14 Despite the slight reduction in applications received overall, demand remained consistently high throughout the year rather than peaking and subsiding. Higher demand was observed during winter months linked to increased energy costs, and additional pressure during school holidays was also experienced. Around 80% of applications related to crisis support in the form of emergency food and energy support. The remaining 20% are standard applications for white goods, furniture, household items and clothing vouchers.
- 2.15 Cost of Living Campaign
Led by Localities in conjunction with Communications, and Customer, Revenues and Benefits, the Council delivered the annual Cost-of-Living Communications campaign over winter 2025/26. Alongside refreshing the cost-of-living web page (www.northyorks.gov.uk/costofliving), activity has been focussed on the following:
- Rolling social media campaign focussing on areas such as financial assistance, staying warm, well, and connected this winter, support for children and families, and access to adult learning opportunities.
 - For North Yorkshire residents who are less confident with technology, printed leaflets and posters were produced which set out alternative options to find out about the help and support available which included: people asking friends and family, at council venues such as libraries or by calling our customer service centre. Communications

packs continue to be shared with partner organisations including community libraries, voluntary and community sector organisations, health settings, schools, parish councils and others including services like adult learning with content and social media assets that are easy for people to share via their own digital channels.

- Targeted focus on uptake of pension credit; this has included a direct mail campaign through which 1,200 households were encouraged to call our Income Maximisation Team. This new service allows residents to check their eligibility for Pension Credit and get support with completing the application if required. A holistic assessment to ensure that broader benefits were being realised (for example blue badge, attendance allowance etc.) was also completed.

2.16 Mental Health

Localities work in partnership with Public Health to deliver Headfirst, a programme that provides mental health and suicide awareness and prevention training. During 2025/26, the service delivered six training courses directly and collaborated with Papyrus to develop and launch a training package for North Yorkshire, which is now live. A key focus for the year was establishing the “train the trainer” model.

- 2.17 The priority for 2026/27 is to secure funding to support individuals to undertake train-the-trainer courses, with the aim of becoming accredited mental health training providers and delivering courses across North Yorkshire.

2.18 Community Resilience & Emergency Support

Following the extensive Fylingdales moorland fire in August 2025, which at its peak covered around 20 square kilometres of moorland, the Communities Team has supported on-going recovery efforts. This has included leading the community engagement strand, ensuring local voices are central to activity, and chairing the multi-agency community engagement recovery cell to coordinate partners and support a cohesive approach. Targeted engagement activity has been undertaken, including a community drop-in session in October 2025, providing residents with information, reassurance, and opportunities to shape recovery plans. The team continues to actively support ongoing recovery activity, maintaining strong links with communities and partners.

2.19 UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation for 2025/2026 was awarded to the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (CA), which had overall responsibility for coordinating delivery across investment themes. Localities were commissioned to deliver three programmes across North Yorkshire and York on behalf of the CA:

- a £500,000 digital inclusion programme
- a £1.3 million capital fund for village halls and community buildings
- a £200,000 revenue fund to support Community Wealth Building

2.20 During 2025/26;

- The Digital Inclusion Programme supported 31 organisations to deliver sessions across 213 venues. A total of 211 digital champions were trained, and 6,427 people received support. The programme also contributed to infrastructure support roles delivered by Community First Yorkshire and York Centre for Voluntary Services, alongside a comprehensive, aligned training offer.
- The Community Buildings & Village Halls Capital Programme awarded 51 grants to improve accessibility and create healthy spaces in community facilities.
- The Community Wealth Building funding was allocated to Community First Yorkshire to deliver a training programme aimed at supporting existing or aspiring social enterprises with a range of business advice and support; the Centre for Local

Economic Strategies (CLES) were commissioned to undertake mapping of the number and value of social enterprise across the region; and 8 grants were awarded to social enterprises for a range of projects from net zero, community housing and creating local networks.

2.21 Trailblazer Programme Funding

Localities are a delivery partner for the national ‘Get Britain Working’ local Trailblazer programme which is supporting economically inactive adults to access employment, training or volunteering. The overall programme is co-ordinated by the CA in partnership with both North Yorkshire Council (NYC), City of York Council and partners from the NHS. Localities helped to administer a range of projects being delivered by the voluntary sector including support for veterans; young people at the risk of being NEET (not in education, employment or training); supported volunteering and community and voluntary sector projects to support people to improve their employability skills. The first year of Trailblazer programmes ran until 31 March 2026 and a review was undertaken in December to shape the priorities and delivery models for future years.

2.22 For year two of Trailblazer, the VCSE grant funded strand have been consolidated into a single Community Grants programme which is being launched in June.

2.23 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.

2.24 Fifteen place-based partnerships are now contributing to local engagement and delivery, of which nine are fully established partnerships with a further six partnerships developing.

2.25 Partnership development is a gradual process however the Town Investment Plans work – being undertaken in partnership with the Council’s Regeneration team - has provided a significant catalyst for some emerging partnerships and is expected to further stimulate the formation and strengthening of additional partnerships in other areas.

2.26 As requested by some of the Members involved in the pilots, a Community Partnership network event was held in January to support progress by bringing established and emerging partnerships together to share learning, good practice, and delivery experience.

2.27 Town Investment Plans (TIP)

The team has been supporting colleagues from Regeneration to develop the TIP programme, a co-ordinated approach to regeneration and investment across the county.

2.28 The programme, which will develop a total of 32 plans across the county, identifies four categories for the development of plans: Urban Centres (3); Principal Service Centres (9); Key Service Centres (10); and Local Service Centres (10).

2.29 Regeneration teams are leading on the development of plans for the Urban and Principal Service Centres (*with support from Localities*) and Localities teams are leading on the development of plans for the Key and Local Service Centres (*with support from Regeneration*).

2.30 During 2025/26 Localities have been leading on the development of TIPs for the following Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres. Stage of development (April 2026):

Project Initiation/ Background Review	Initial Engagement	Plan draft/ Project identification
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Leyburn (Key)	Filey (Key)	Bentham (Key)
Tadcaster (Key)	Pickering (Key)	Bedale (Key)
Easingwold (Local)	Sherburn in Elmet (Key)	Masham (Local)
Boroughbridge (Local)	Grassington & Threshfield (Local)	Pateley Bridge (Local)
	Eastfield (Local)	

2.31 The team has also been supporting the development of Regeneration team led TIPs in Richmond, Ripon, Skipton, Scarborough, Selby and Harrogate.

3.0 Parish Liaison, Local Devolution and Community Rights (PLDCR) Team Update

3.1 The PLDCR Team works alongside the county's 573 Parish Councils offering a range of support. They also support NYC services to engage with all Parish Sector Organisations (PSO's). The team is also responsible for managing the Council's corporate arrangements for the devolution of Council assets and services to PSOs and community groups and also the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to Community Rights Legislation.

3.2 Parish Liaison

In 2025/26, there were 28 outreach activities hosted by the Parish Liaison Team, including formal Parish Liaison Meetings and Parish Drop-in Surgeries. The team also offer virtual drop-in sessions in response to concerns expressed about the accessibility of face-to-face meetings. The team has recently completed a survey with the Consultation Panel to review the effectiveness of the current Parish Liaison offer. The results will help shape the future of the Parish Liaison Team's outreach activity.

3.3 The Parish Liaison Team coordinates a representative Parish Consultation Panel that is consulted on a regular basis on PSO matters of common interest. In 2025/26, eight surveys were undertaken. The results of these surveys help us to gain valuable insight into the work of the Parish Sector and the issues they face.

3.4 Responding to one of the priorities raised by PSOs – for access to relevant information and consultations being more streamlined – a dedicated Parish Council website will be launched in June 2026. This will bring all key information for Parish Councils together in one place to make access simpler for them. It will also provide dedicated information and support to all PSOs on a regular basis.

3.5 Local Devolution and Community Rights

It is anticipated over the coming year the focus will be on developing a strategic approach to local devolution, accelerating delivery, supporting all stakeholders through clear processes, and ensuring that North Yorkshire Council is ready to ensure compliance with a new legislative framework linked to Community Rights as it comes into force (see paragraph 5.6). Paragraphs 3.6 – 3.8 summarise activity in these areas for 2025/26.

3.6 Assets of Community Value (ACVs)

2025/26 was the first full year where ACVs were managed by a central team within the Localities Service. Of 17 ACV decisions in 2025/26, 14 were successful and three were unsuccessful. There was one request for an internal review made by the owner of site listed as an ACV, the outcome of the review was that the decision was upheld.

3.7 Community Asset Transfers

The Council currently progresses applications for Community Asset Transfers using an interim/legacy policy and process. The exception to this is applications made through the Double Devolution pilot (see paragraph 3.8). The new Community Transfer Policy, and

associated process, is intended to formalise arrangements and cover all types of local devolution, replacing Double Devolution. The table below is a summary of current asset transfers progressing via the interim/legacy policy & process for Community Transfers (accurate at the end of April 2026):

Stage	Status	No. April 2026
Pre-EOI	EOI forms shared with applicant	8
EOI	EOI assessment is yet to undergo a Property Test	2
EOI	EOI assessment is yet to undergo an Organisation Test	0
EOI	Applications awaiting sign off	0
EOI	Applications signed off	5
Business case	Assessment is ongoing	0
Business case	Awaiting sign off	0
Business case	Signed off/successful & progressing in line with Property Procedure Rules	2
Community Transfers completed since April 2025		0

3.8 Double Devolution

The Double Devolution Pilot programme includes nine proposals at different stages. Over half (five of nine) are either agreed or progressing towards agreement and implementation. The remainder are either under development, subject to further clarification, aligned to other processes, or not being progressed. A new Community Transfer Policy is in development, and this enables the opportunity to confirm transitional arrangements. It is proposed that the Council would continue to work with those currently within the Double Devolution pilot programme, to progress proposals where possible. An indicative timeframe of 31 March 2027 has been identified to support this process, after which there may be an opportunity to submit further proposals in-line with the Community Transfer arrangements, subject to future decisions. Further details on current Double Devolution proposals are within the table below:

Parish Council	Details of proposal	Status
Malton	Management of Malton Market Place public conveniences	Agreed by Executive, agreement not to implement was made post Executive decision
Knaresborough	Management of the weekly market	Agreed by Executive and progressing towards implementation
Ripon	Leasehold transfer of Ripon Town Hall	Agreed by Executive and progressing towards implementation
Ripon	Transfer of High Ripley Hall & Wakeman's House	Progressing ahead of Executive decision
Filey	Transfer of management of benches	Bench data and legal agreement being finalised ahead of implementation

Selby	Potential transfer of a number of parks/open spaces, buildings including community centres	Sites appropriate for local devolution confirmed with Selby Town Council and relevant site-specific information shared - STC invited to submit a business case
Northallerton & Thirsk	Joint venture to manage the local markets	Financial information shared with Northallerton Town Council, Thirsk likely descoped from proposal, further work required to confirm whether Town Council intend to progress proposal
Whitby	Provision and management of parks and grounds maintenance and floral displays (excluding highways verges) including Pannett Park, equipment and depot space	Further work required to confirm whether the Town Council intend to progress proposal
Richmond	Management of The Friary Gardens	Agreement made not to progress
Skipton	Management of the Ginnet Woods and Canal Basin	Development of proposals at these sites now aligned with Town Investment Plan process, further work required to confirm whether Town Council intend to progress proposal

4.0 Migrant Programmes Team Update

4.1 Integrated Community Support – SWIFT

The Council-led Swift Partnership is National Lottery funded and provides place-based support to migrant communities in North Yorkshire. The Swift Programme deliver a local migrant community development programme, focussed within the towns of Selby, Harrogate and Scarborough, in partnership with the VCSE.

4.2 Advice and Casework is now embedded as a key element, with referrals between place-based partners and North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law Centre working well.

4.3 Two phases of the VCSE training programme have now been completed, 336 unique individuals representing staff and volunteers from the local voluntary and public sector have accessed the provision.

4.4 The Swift Website (www.swiftnorthyorkshire.co.uk) has been launched and is fully operational. The multi-lingual and area-specific site contains a wealth of useful information for those arriving into North Yorkshire from overseas as well as providing an online referral system for individuals and groups to access specialist support.

4.5 Translation and Interpretation

The Council's Translation and Interpretation services, which are managed by the Migrant Programmes Team, continue to be accessed by officers across the council on a self-serve basis, funded by the relevant team at the point of access.

4.6 The pilot of Convo (formerly SignLive) is effectively reducing barriers at the front door and enabling resolution at the first point of contact for British Sign Language (BSL) users.

4.7 The new AI translation service is now in use as a pilot and demonstrating potential for cost reductions, with both staff confidence and usage steadily increasing. Good progress

is being made towards the projected savings in overall translation costs, with approximately £20,000 saved in the last six months compared to the same period last year. It is anticipated these savings will continue and potentially increase next financial year.

5.0 Future Developments

5.1 Prevention Plus Pilots

Work has started on an enhanced prevention model across North Yorkshire. The model entitled *Prevention Plus* will fund eleven test and learn pilots across the county. The ambition is to create a system approach to form a local ring of support around an individual, enabling an individual to live a fuller, better-quality of life within their own environment, with a strong and supportive link to their community. It builds on the strengths of trusted VCSE organisations, embedded statutory roles, and place-based multi-agency working. The three-year Test and Learn Pilot will commence in Autumn 2026.

5.2 Crisis and Resilience Fund

Replacing Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payment, the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) is a new three-year, UK government funded scheme to provide emergency financial support as well as preventative and resilience building activity to low-income households. Given the alignment of the strategic priorities of Localities with the CRF guidance, the team are currently supporting Customer, Revenues and Benefits to develop the scheme, ready for the submission of the Delivery Plan to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) in early July 2026.

5.3 VCSE Offer

Work started in 2025/26 to design and embed a comprehensive 'deal' for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector across the Council. This will be known as the VCSE Offer. The offer will provide clarity regarding how the Council will work and do business with the sector, ensuring consistency across the Council. It will bring together a range of existing legacy arrangements from across the Council into one place with a set of common principles and processes.

5.4 The Council's Thriving Communities Partnership meetings have been used as a forum to engage with VCSE organisations and gather feedback. The Wider Partnership Conference in November 2025 was also used to engage with the VCSE sector and other partners around collaboration and the conditions required for effective joint working, this will inform the development of a relational framework to support partnership working.

5.6 Benchmarking has been undertaken to assess the Council's current approach to working with the VCSE, to understand the current offer and identify areas for improvement. Work has started on reviewing processes for grants management to support more consistent and efficient processes and on reviewing the former VCSE sector specialist support Approved Provider List with a view of putting in place a new provider framework that can be used by all Council services and relevant partner organisations. Delivery of this project will be a key focus in 2026/27.

5.7 Town Investment Plans

As part of the ongoing programme of developing TIPs, work is due to start in Settle, Helmsley, South Craven, Ingleton, Kirkbymoorside and Stokesley throughout 2026.27.

5.8 Community Transfer Policy and Procedure

The Community Transfer Policy introduces a single, clear and transparent framework for the transfer of Council-owned assets and services to Parish Sector Organisations (PSOs) and the voluntary and community sector, including charities and social enterprises (VCSEs). It supports the Council's devolution ambitions and aligns with the North Yorkshire Council Plan and Corporate Property Strategy, to replace previous approaches including the Double Devolution pilot. The Policy covers a range of arrangements including freehold and leasehold transfers, licences at less than market value, and service transfers, where there is a demonstrable community benefit. It establishes an overarching framework for both Community Asset Transfer and Community Service Transfer, recognising that service transfers will be delivered through a more flexible and evolving operational approach.

The Community Transfer Policy is now in final draft and moving through governance. The draft policy is available for pre-decision scrutiny and is included on the agenda for this meeting. Consideration by the Executive is planned in July 2026.

5.9 Changes to Community Rights arising from English Devolution & Community Empowerment Act 2026

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill¹ received Royal Assent in April 2026. Internal work has been undertaken to raise awareness across services of the forthcoming changes, particularly in relation to Assets of Community Value (ACVs), also known as the Community Right to Bid. The main changes are linked to enhancement of the powers and a widening of the criteria for listing. As such, the Community Right to Bid is to be replaced by a new Community Right to Buy and two new categories will be introduced: Sporting Assets of Community Value and Sites Supporting Sporting Assets of Community Value. Once implemented there will be associated changes to timescales, assessment, processes and guidance. Implementation depends on the publication of secondary legislation and guidance by Government, which is expected later in 2026.

5.10 Best Start/Family Hubs

The Localities Team is working with colleagues in Children's and Young People's Services developing the county's 'Best Start in Life Programme' to support engagement with Voluntary and Community Sector partners. This is being facilitated through the network of Community Anchor Organisations to help identify locally based community organisations that provide services for families and carers with children under five.

6.0 Corporate Volunteering Update

6.1 The Corporate Volunteer Project relates to all volunteering activity that takes place by members of the community to support North Yorkshire Council services. This includes volunteers who help across many different services from the Skipton Museum, Youth Justice Service, Libraries, Major Incident Response, Countryside Service and Waste reduction education.

6.2 Sponsored by Stronger Communities the corporate Volunteer Project is delivered by the Resourcing Solutions Team – HR, recognising the synergies between the volunteer journey and employee journey, whilst acknowledging that there are key differences between the two. The focus for this project is to maximise and optimise the use of volunteers across all council services, creating consistencies in: marketing, recruitment, induction, expenses, training, ongoing support and efficient volunteer processes.

6.3 A Volunteer Sub-Group meets regularly to provide a steer for the project, discussing challenges and priorities and inputting into areas of work as they progress. This group

¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026](#)

comprises of representatives from Stronger Communities and the Resourcing Solutions Team and lead officers from the services that manage volunteers.

6.4 Volunteer Numbers

The number of registered volunteers in March 2026 stood at approximately 4298. This includes people who volunteer their time to support wider council services such as community libraries, 'Friends Of' groups and as School Governors. Detail of all the services who engage volunteers support, is provided in appendix 1.

7.0 Recommendation

7.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report and advise officers regarding any areas of the work that they may wish to see more detailed information.

Rachel Joyce
Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement

30 April 2026

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Summary of Corporate Volunteering Levels