

North Yorkshire Councillors report January 2024

As we start the new year there is much to consider as the political and economic landscape continues to change with the advent of a new Government implementing their own policy priorities over the previous administration giving a very different flavour to the economy and how they engage with both residents and Local Government.

This along with the continued influence of international events on the cost of living, will not doubt make for a very challenging year ahead. How these factors will influence the work of North Yorkshire Council will to a great extent be defined by the substantial financial pressures the emerging Government financial settled is placing on the residents of North Yorkshire.

One of the headline funding changes is the complete removal of the Rural Settlement grant (RSG), a fund which was previously awarded to rural authorities to help mitigate the higher costs of delivering services across larger rural geographies with sparse populations. This amounts to a loss in excess of £14 million per annum, which along with other cost base increases such as the higher National Insurance rates and minimum wage pressures, will need to be mitigated by further cost efficiencies given the limited revenue increases offered by Council tax increases. This of course is before taking into account the inflationary effects of increasing inflation leading to higher supplier costs, which given the size of the organisation, all leads to some challenging times ahead.

As ever I will be a vocal supporter for our part of the County but we must be aware that it is not always possible to do more with less.

Strategy launched to make culture and arts available for all

Leading arts organisations have welcomed the launch of a new strategy to place culture and heritage at the heart of improving people's lives in North Yorkshire's communities.

North Yorkshire Council's new plan, which is being funded by Arts Council England and has been developed with input from the sector and communities, is the first countywide blueprint to boost participation, nurture creative talent, use accessible spaces and maximise the value of cultural assets.

The initiative is aimed at bringing together communities and partner organisations and creative groups to engage people of all ages, backgrounds and locations to make cultural experiences accessible, inclusive, and integral to the public's wellbeing.

The cultural strategy was launched (Friday, December 13) at the Milton Rooms in Malton, when councillors were joined by 150 representatives from leading organisations and creative groups to learn more about what is planned.

The creation of a digital creative hub and a regional symposium will support resource sharing, collaboration, and improvement across the cultural sector. The strategy recognises the importance of culture to the health and wellbeing of communities and the county's economy, with an ambition to create equal access for all to culture, arts and heritage.

North Yorkshire has a wide-ranging cultural offer from world class museums, cutting-edge exhibitions, libraries and innovative theatre to festivals, events and opportunities to engage in everyday creativity from rural to urban communities. The sector is growing at a rate over three times that of the national average, and there are 1.8 million people across the UK employed in culture-related jobs with the industry contributing £125 billion to the economy.

Creative and cultural engagement is essential for people's health and has powerful potential in both preventative healthcare and treatment of health conditions. The strategy includes plans for more collaborative work with City of York Council and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.

In the past year, North Yorkshire Council has been awarded an Arts Council England grant of £1.2 million as part of a national programme to provide high-quality music education for all children and young people.

The £1 million Now Then! project, which is funded by North Yorkshire Council and Arts Council England, is delivering cultural and creative schemes to develop a community-led approach to arts development for people of all ages and backgrounds, especially young people and children. The initiative is focused on the areas of Selby, Tadcaster and Sherburn in Elmet.

Craven Museum at Skipton Town Hall was awarded £15,000 as one of five finalists for the National Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024, the largest museum prize in the world.

The North Yorkshire coast has also been the focus of several cultural festivals, including the Scarborough Fair programme which has seen events such as Scarborough Lights, Scarborough Art and Scarborough Fringe staged.

The Mercer Gallery in Harrogate also showcased bold creations from female filmmakers earlier this year, with the exhibition featuring a diverse range of video film and digital works. The event was made possible after the council invested in more than £7,000 for new technology.

The cultural strategy can be accessed via www.northyorks.gov.uk/cultural-strategy online.

Empowering young people to help to shape fostering services

A dynamic group of young people who have lived in foster care across North Yorkshire are making waves with their dedication to improving the services that have helped to shape their lives through an initiative which aims to ensure that future foster carers are equipped to meet the needs of the children they care for.

With a shared passion for advocacy and change, the young people aged 11 to 25 have formed the "Care Champions" to share the voice of those who have lived in foster care and to influence policy. They have embarked on their second major project of the year following the resounding success of their "My First Night" initiative. In their first project, the Care Champions created a welcome pack aimed at easing the transition for young people entering foster care.

Drawing from their own experiences, they included comforting items, heartfelt postcards from fellow young people with experience in care, and a personalised booklet for both the new arrivals and their foster carers. The booklet contained valuable information about the individual's personality, preferences and the home environment - all designed to make the first night in care a little more comforting.

Building on this momentum, the Care Champions have now turned their attention to understanding and influencing the fostering process itself. During their meetings, the group expressed a keen interest in learning about foster carer selection, interviewing and training. They believe that gaining an insight into why people choose to become foster carers and understanding the intricacies of the process is crucial.

The Care Champions are currently advocating for the inclusion of fostered young people in the recruitment process. They are working on a bespoke training program that is purely young person-focused, offering perspectives directly from those who experienced or lived in care.

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£5.7m investment in gritting fleet to keep the county moving

A multi-million pound partnership has been secured to upgrade around half of North Yorkshire's gritting fleet to ensure the latest technology is treating the county's network. NY Highways, which runs the winter service on behalf of North Yorkshire Council, has entered a seven-year lease with Ripon based engineering firm Econ.

The £5.7 million contract will see 31 new gritters treat the county's 5,800 miles of roads, which, laid end to end, would run from Northallerton to Tokyo. The gritters have been delivered in batches starting from October, and the final ones will be on the road by January.

About 70 gritters are required to run the winter maintenance service across the county each year, with the new gritters replacing the oldest vehicles in the fleet.

Gritters, their drivers, duty managers and officers are on call 24 hours a day between October and April – and longer if weather conditions require. Last year, more than 5,000 routes were treated. Cameras and trackers are fitted in the gritters, which provide up-to-date information and allows them to be tracked online.

Further information on gritting operations, including road cameras and maps, can be found at www.northyorks.gov.uk/gritting

Gritting updates are posted on the council's Twitter and Facebook accounts @northyorksc

Tailored SEND support at county's mainstream schools welcomed

Children with specialist needs are set to receive the support they require in an inclusive environment designed to help them to “become the best they can be”.

Increasing demand for SEND provision has reached a record high and while the problem is not unique to North Yorkshire, these figures are a reminder of the huge pressure which councils are under and the costs of this a real concern.

pioneering project equipping mainstream schools in North Yorkshire to have the resources to foster development of children and young people with additional needs and help them to thrive is happening thanks to a key investment from North Yorkshire Council.

“Exceptional progress” has already been made by pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) at Alverton Primary School in Northallerton, thanks to the Targeted Mainstream Provision (TMP) Programme, which focuses on tailored support for children without them having to travel miles to another provision.

Children accessing the TMP all have an education and healthcare plan (EHCP) and receive a tailored curriculum and, where required, a therapeutic package to support their needs while remaining amongst their peers and educated close to their homes.

Latest data reveals the number of young people identified with SEND and EHCPs in North Yorkshire has increased by more than 110 per cent since 2016. The demand

Up to 31 TMPs are planned to be created overall in the county, offering 248 full-time places. Each school that hosts a TMP will offer eight full-time places for six children and young people with an EHCP and two “flexible” places for children needing access for short-term assessment and support.

Each school is given funds for set up costs, along with key training, monitoring and the opportunity to work with others to share best practice. In all cases, children and young people will be offered bespoke timetables to allow access to the mainstream curriculum, as well as additional support and therapies, such as occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and educational psychology support.

There are currently 11 TMPs open across North Yorkshire with more in development.

North Yorkshire Council recently gave the go-ahead for TMPs to be created at Dishforth Airfield Community Primary School in Thirsk and Norton Community Primary School from January 2025.

The additional provisions will provide essential support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, helping them to thrive in an inclusive environment and it is pleasing and encouraging to see the early success of the provision at Alverton Primary School. It is anticipated that with more local provision, North Yorkshire's children and young people with SEND will have further opportunities to be educated close to their home and stay with their friends where they belong, helping them to achieve better educational and social outcomes to "become the best they can be."

Launch of tourism campaign to entice film and television fans

The stunning landscapes and venues across North Yorkshire and their links to film and television are to be the centrepiece of a campaign aimed at attracting a wave of visitors to the county.

The first marketing campaign of 2025 will see the county's tourism organisation, Visit North Yorkshire, highlight a wide range of locations that have been used in, inspired or have connections to movie blockbusters and hit TV shows. More than £4 billion is brought into North Yorkshire's economy each year through tourism and the industry supports 38,500 jobs.

The opportunity of promoting North Yorkshire's connections to locations linked to film, television and literature has been highlighted as a way of boosting the county's multi-billion pound tourism sector. North Yorkshire has carved out an enviable reputation as a filming location for Hollywood films such as the final Indiana Jones movie starring Harrison Ford and the latest instalment of Tom Cruise's Mission Impossible franchise. And the county's coastal towns, historic ruins and stately homes have also featured as venues for film crews involved in leading television shows.

The new campaign, called Starring North Yorkshire, will complement Visit England's own international marketing drive, Starring Great Britain. It will see the locations used for film and television promoted via Visit North Yorkshire's social media channels and an itinerary is being drawn up that will be available on the tourism organisation's new website, which is due to launch in the spring.

Data from Visit England has shown that more than nine in 10 of inbound visitors would be interested in visiting a film or TV location in the UK. The research has also shown that one in six holidaymakers in the UK were influenced by a film or TV location to travel outside of London, while 70 per cent of visitors have visited a film or TV location nationally.

North Yorkshire is home to Herriot Country linked to Alf Wight's novels and the television series, All Creatures Great and Small, while Fountains Abbey and Plumptre Rocks landscape gardens were used as locations for the Netflix fantasy drama series, The Witcher. Both the North Yorkshire Moors Railway and the world-famous limestone pavements at Malham Cove have featured in the Harry Potter films based on author JK Rowling's novels about the young wizard. The railway was also used to shoot scenes for the movies Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny along with Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning Part One.

Robin Hood's Bay, Scarborough, Staithes and Whitby were all used as filming locations for the Oscar-winning 2017 film, Phantom Thread, starring Daniel Day Lewis.

The Castle Howard estate featured in period dramas such as Brideshead Revisited and Bridgerton, while the Yorkshire Dales village of Kettlewell was a location for the 2003 film, Calendar Girls starring Julie Walters and Helen Mirren.

The popularity of Bridgerton has attracted a wave of interest from younger generations, and Castle Howard witnessed an increase of more than 3,000 per cent in the number of people aged 18 to 24 who clicked on the estate's website after the period drama's first season was screened on Netflix in 2020.

Visit North Yorkshire officially launched in October and work is under way to promote a 10-year vision to boost tourism through the first countywide strategy of its kind. One of the central themes of the proposed destination management plan is aimed at increasing the value of the visitor economy rather than the actual number of visitors.

Targets have been set to grow the value of the visitor economy over the rate of inflation by a fifth in the next decade and increase the percentage of overnight visitors from 20 to 23 per cent during the same period. Specific trends that have been identified as opportunities for growing the market include environmentally-friendly travel, stays that are off-grid and away from the pressures of modern life and also attracting business travellers to spend leisure time in the county.

The destination management plan is aimed at capitalising on the diversity of what is on offer in the county, including its famous countryside, stately homes and gardens and history and heritage.

Other promotional campaigns planned for 2025 include a bid to raise awareness of the Visit North Yorkshire brand to coincide the launch of its new website.

Family toolkit to help parents and carers in North Yorkshire

Families will be given greater access to the most relevant parenting support whenever they need it through an innovative new project launched by North Yorkshire Council.

Officers working with children and families in North Yorkshire have created a bespoke programme called “Your Family Toolkit” – an adaptable and flexible resource for all professionals working with children, young people and their families to enhance parenting strategies. The new toolkit has been designed to sit alongside North Yorkshire Council’s universal offer of online parenting courses offered through Solihull Approach, <https://inourplace.co.uk/north-yorkshire/>, which is currently being accessed by more than 3,000 residents in North Yorkshire. The free resource offers a different level of bespoke support, advice and guidance for families, and is not a traditional programme, typically delivered over a set number of weeks and focussing on a variety of topics.

Instead – just like choosing the right tools for the job from a toolbox – staff can pick and choose the specific modules that are right at that time for the families they are working with, and they can choose as many or as few as they wish to meet their needs.

Modules have been created that are suitable for all ages, as well as ones specific for parenting younger and older children with core topics including thinking about special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), coping with change and conflict and understanding the role of a parent. Each module contains a host of information and can be delivered either face-to-face or online.

The modules can be delivered in a group situation, or they can be delivered on a one-to-one basis by the staff member who knows the families best. Each module can be delivered within a two-hour timeframe, but this will vary according to the shared conversations and questions that the module will spark.

For further details about accessing the toolkit, please contact your Early Help Consultant or your locality hub on the following contact numbers - West: 01609 53484, Central: 01609 534829, East: 01609 534852.

