

## North Yorkshire Councillor report – February 2026

### **Pledge to improve quality of social homes welcomed by tenants**

Tenants have welcomed a pledge to deliver higher quality homes with improved energy-saving features that can enhance residents' quality of life and save them money.

North Yorkshire Council is working to minimise the number of empty houses that it owns across the county and guarantee that all homes meet the highest standards upon handover. That commitment was reinforced last year when the authority adopted a new lettable standard which sets out the minimum condition a council-owned property must meet before it is re-let.

The guidelines include ensuring homes are decorated to a high standard, have quality flooring in kitchens and bathrooms, and are free from hazards including damp, mould and internal asbestos. It was adopted to help ensure tenants receive a fair and consistent service – whichever part of North Yorkshire that they live.

The enhanced standard has increased the amount of time taken to turn around vacant homes, resulting in the number of empty properties, known as voids, rising from 212 in January 2025 to 407 in October 2025. But tenants say this is not necessarily a negative, with more time being taken while the homes are empty to allow for vital upgrades including energy-efficiency improvements that will provide long-term benefits.

The council currently owns and manages 8,500 homes across England's largest county. Nearly 250 houses have already been upgraded ready to provide high-quality accommodation for new tenants. To further speed up the process, the council has significantly increased the number of contractors used to help carry out the works.

The authority has set a target of having no more than 2.5 per cent of its homes – 210 properties – being empty any one time. This target reflects the balance between minimising rent loss and ensuring homes are brought up to the best possible standard before being let to tenants.

A report which sets out the council's approach to managing its empty houses can be viewed on North Yorkshire Council's website [here](#).

More than 1,000 social and privately-owned homes affected by problems such as poor insulation and ineffective heating have been upgraded since North Yorkshire Council was formed in April 2023. Hundreds more families are set to benefit in the

coming years, with the council having received £28 million as part of the Government's Warm Homes Social Housing Fund and Warm Homes Local Grant, and pledging a further £19 million from its own reserves to upgrade more than 1,900 homes.

## **Buy your garden waste licence for 2026 fortnightly service**

Residents are being reminded to purchase their garden waste collection licence ahead of the launch of the annual service in March. North Yorkshire Council is offering a licence at a cost of £52 for the coming season, which runs between March and early December.

The licence covers one 240-litre wheelie bin to be emptied fortnightly. Anyone who would like to have more than one bin emptied can pay for a licence for each additional bin.

Depending on where they live, some residents may be provided with an equivalent number of compostable sacks.

When residents buy a licence, they will receive a licence pack within 14 days. To make a payment and for more information about the garden waste service, including collection dates, visit the council's website at [www.northyorks.gov.uk/garden-waste](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/garden-waste)

Residents who do not have enough garden waste for a fortnightly collection can compost at home or take it to one of the 20 household waste recycling centres across North Yorkshire. The council has an offer for a low-cost compost bin, and further information is available at [www.northyorks.gov.uk/composting](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/composting)

More information about the council's waste recycling centres is available at [www.northyorks.gov.uk/household-waste-recycling-centres](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/household-waste-recycling-centres)

## **Army reservist backs council's support for the Armed Forces**

An Army reservist who balances military service with her role at North Yorkshire Council has praised the authority after it received a prestigious award for its support of the Armed Forces community.

The Government recently revalidated North Yorkshire Council's Gold Award status under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). The

ERS Gold Award is the highest accolade available to organisations that demonstrate exceptional support for the Armed Forces community.

The award, given by Secretary of State for Defence, John Healey, is valid for five years and confirms that the council has not only maintained but strengthened its forces-friendly policies, including flexible working for reservists and active engagement with defence networks and community initiatives.

North Yorkshire has a deep and enduring connection with the Armed Forces, and it's only right the Council continue to demonstrate our unwavering support for serving personnel, veterans, and their families.

Retention of our Gold Award status reflects the significant work taking place across the organisation to ensure that members of our military community feel genuinely valued, respected, and supported. As part of achieving the accreditation the council also demonstrated how it was supporting local cadet units and cadet force adult volunteers.

In addition, last year's Armed Forces Day in Scarborough was organised by the council in conjunction with representatives from local Royal British Legion, veterans' representatives, Heroes' Welcome, Sea Cadets, Air Cadets, Army Cadets and Scarborough University Technical College Combined Cadet Force.

Cadets from Wensleydale also attended the Armed Forces Day for Children in June and the Festival of Remembrance where they acted as standard bearers.

North Yorkshire Council first signed the Armed Forces Covenant, which seeks to prevent forces personnel and veterans from being disadvantaged when accessing public services, back in 2011. It reaffirmed its commitment in 2021 when it became law and again in 2023 following local government reorganisation.

There were 29,831 former members of the Armed Forces living in North Yorkshire, according to data from the 2021 Census.

Catterick Garrison is one of the largest military establishments in the UK, and has associated barracks at Dishforth, Ripon and Topcliffe. Other military sites in North Yorkshire also include the Army Foundation College at Harrogate, while the Royal Air Force has stations at Leeming, Fylingdales, Staxton Wold and Menwith Hill.

For more information on the council's support for the Armed Forces visit <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/armed-forces-covenant>.

## **Warning over illegal burning of waste as businessman convicted**

Business owners have been warned that they will face prosecution for the illegal burning of waste after a court case saw one offender brought to justice.

Boyd Batchelor, from Harrogate, pleaded guilty after he was charged under the Clean Air Act of 1993 when dark smoke was spotted from the illegal burning of waste.

In May last year, an environmental health officer from North Yorkshire Council witnessed the dark smoke billowing from a premises on land to the rear of Eubank Field, near Knaresborough. It was later established that the smoke was coming from a fire on land used by Tillage Nurseries based on Farnham Lane in Knaresborough.

Under section two of the Clean Air Act of 1993, it is illegal to emit dark smoke from the burning of waste from an industrial or trade premises. Anyone found guilty of an offence can face a fine of up to £20,000.

Batchelor failed to respond to requests to explain why dark smoke was coming from his premises, so North Yorkshire Council instigated court proceedings.

At York Magistrates Court (January 22), Batchelor maintained that he had not started the fire himself and that at the time he was not aware of it, stating that it had been started by an employee. Batchelor said he was very sorry for the inconvenience caused, and he accepted that he did not have permission to burn waste.

In passing sentence, the chair of the bench thanked Batchelor for his early guilty plea. But, while there is no guideline for this particular offence, the chair stated that this was reckless behaviour, and that Batchelor had not provided enough training or warnings.

Mr Batchelor was fined £1,730, which was reduced to £1,153 to take into account his guilty plea. He was also ordered to pay £461 in a statutory surcharge and a £500 contribution towards the prosecution costs of the legal action.

Businesses have a legal responsibility to dispose of their waste in a safe and lawful manner. This includes ensuring that waste is stored, transported, and disposed of without harming the environment or human health.

Burning waste not only breaks the law, it also creates harmful smoke that affects the health and wellbeing of nearby communities. In this instance and despite clear warnings, the activity continued, leaving the council with no choice but to take enforcement action. So this case serves as a timely reminder that businesses must follow the rules and manage their waste responsibly.

**New approach to reduce roadworks disruption gets green light**

A scheme is set to be introduced to charge utility companies and other organisations for carrying out roadworks on key roads during the busiest times of the day.

The Department for Transport has approved North Yorkshire Council's application for a lane rental scheme, which is already successfully operating in London and Kent, to reduce traffic disruption. Under the scheme, companies would incur daily fees of up to £2,500 for undertaking maintenance work at peak times.

It is designed to reduce the length of works and encourage companies to work together to minimise inconvenience. When piloted in the South of England, the initiative recorded a significant reduction in congestion, as companies worked outside peak times to avoid accumulating charges.

Following an application last April, we have received approval to adopt a better approach to those carrying out roadworks. Anecdotally charging for the time roadworks are in place incentivises contractors to complete the work quickly and outside of peak times.

The scheme could be in operation in the spring, with any surplus invested into highways maintenance and measures that reduce disruption on the network.

North Yorkshire, which is England's largest county, has a network of roads stretching a total of nearly 5,800 miles. Lane rental charges would apply to works on about seven per cent of the county's overall road network, or almost 500 miles, which have been prioritised to minimise disruption.

## **Research shows council is offering among best value nationally**

Taxpayers in North Yorkshire are being given some of the best value for money in England as independent research has placed the delivery of council services in the county as among the best performing nationally.

The analysis has ranked North Yorkshire Council as the third most productive local authority in the country in the IMPOWER Index, with the council being the best performing in the North of England. The announcement is being heralded as support for the move to create a single organisation in the county when the previous eight authorities merged from April 1, 2023.

The ranking also comes with an extremely challenging financial situation with the council facing a £40 million gap in its budget over just two financial years, heightening the need to ensure every pound of taxpayers' money is used as effectively as possible.

The index has been compiled by researchers at IMPOWER, a consultancy firm which was launched in 2000 to provide an insight into how effective the public sector

is performing. The analysis measures productivity based on outcomes achieved per pound spent across seven major service areas that typically account for 70 per cent of spending in local government. These services include children's social care, special educational needs and disabilities, housing, homelessness and waste and recycling along with social care for older adults as well as working age adults.

IMPOWER'S top 10 rankings highlight authorities that outperform their closest statistical neighbours by the largest margins across the most service areas which were analysed.

The index has been published just over three months after social care for adults in the county was praised following an in-depth inspection that has placed North Yorkshire Council's services among the best nationally.

A report was published in October by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) after inspectors carried out a wide-ranging analysis of the council's care services. The inspectors awarded a good rating with an overall score of 81, which placed North Yorkshire Council among the best in the country for adult social care.

IMPOWER's research has also been published as North Yorkshire Council is facing a funding gap of about £40 million that spans the current financial year and the next financial year for 2026/27.

The Government has made major changes to the way local government is funded, and this has seen the council losing almost £20 million in its core funding just 12 months after being handed one of the worst financial settlements nationally. The council has already been battling a financial shortfall of more than £20 million in the current financial year.

The move to a single unitary authority with the creation of North Yorkshire Council has, however, provided the opportunity to deliver services more effectively with greater economies of scale across England's largest county. Following the launch of North Yorkshire Council in April 2023, a plan has been drawn up to make more than £130 million in savings, of which £68 million would not have been achievable without local government reorganisation.

## **Finance – Local Government settlement 2026-29**

Following on from my last report and ahead of our upcoming Full Council meeting where the budget will be agreed, below is a link for a YouTube presentation by the Council finance Director, Gary Fielding, along with a link to a FAQ page on the council's website.

I hope these may help give yourselves and residents further insight into the challenges NYC faced when formulating our budget for the upcoming year.

<https://youtu.be/rdbwjCcPiDM>

[www.northyorks.gov.uk/budgetPTC](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/budgetPTC)