

North Yorkshire Councillor report November 2024

Step forward for expansion of ‘much-needed’ specialist school places

A school in Harrogate is set to expand to accommodate dozens of extra pupils to help to meet soaring demand for specialist education after plans were approved.

Springwater School, which is a community special school in Starbeck, caters for students aged from two to 19 who have a range of special educational needs including autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs. The school provided 112 places for children during the 2023/24 academic year.

Members of North Yorkshire Council’s executive today (November 5) approved proposals to expand the number of places by 45 to 157 pupils from September next year after a five-week consultation, which was launched on September 6. The majority of responses agreed the proposal to expand the numbers was a good idea and much needed, responding to the pressure of places for special education needs (SEN) pupils.

The expansion would be achieved through a significant capital investment to redevelop two buildings next to the school creating dedicated classrooms, new changing facilities, outdoor space including an area for sixth-form pupils and a kitchen.

Libraries launch online support sessions for bus pass applications

Libraries across North Yorkshire are setting time aside to help people apply for bus passes to cope with an unprecedented demand.

Staff and volunteers will offer one-to-one support for people to complete the online application process for either the older persons or disabled persons bus pass. Nine libraries across the county will be offering sessions on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

The sessions will be held on a weekly basis at the following libraries:

Ripon on Mondays from 10am to 12noon.

Knaresborough on Mondays from 2pm to 3pm.

Pickering on Tuesdays from 1pm to 3pm.

Malton on Tuesdays from 1.30pm to 4.30pm.

Selby on Tuesdays from 2pm to 4pm.

Northallerton on Wednesdays from 2pm to 4pm.

Whitby on Thursdays from 2pm to 5pm.

Scarborough on Fridays from 2pm to 4pm.

The sessions at Skipton Library will be fortnightly on Wednesdays from 12noon to 4pm.

Library visitors who need help with their online applications should contact the library to book an appointment. They will be required to bring a digital passport style photo that clearly shows their full face, supporting evidence of age and address, and provide a valid email address.

For more information on the older persons or disabled persons bus pass and to check eligibility, visit www.northyorks.gov.uk/bus-and-travel-passes

All libraries in North Yorkshire provide access to computers and have free Wi-Fi and printing for those who want to use their own devices.

The library service also boasts many volunteer IT buddies, who are on hand to support residents in learning how to use their phones, tablets, and computers.

For information on all library services, including contact details of your local branch, visit www.northyorks.gov.uk/libraries

Reignite a passion for work by making your next career move

Jobseekers are to benefit from one of the largest recruitment drives in North Yorkshire's history which has been launched in a bid to entice new talent.

The Local Government Association has launched a recruitment campaign, Make a Difference, Work for your Local Council, that will run until the end of January.

North Yorkshire Council has a workforce of about 15,000 and delivers essential and wide-ranging services across England's largest county.

More than nine in 10 councils across the country are experiencing staff recruitment and retention difficulties as demand for services continues to rise, highlighting the vital need to attract more people into the workforce.

For North Yorkshire Council, about 3,500 vacancies have been advertised in the past year to more than 1,000 different job roles. There are an average of 270 roles advertised monthly and there can be up to 350 different jobs to apply for that change daily. The careers provide services that residents rely on every day, including social care for adults and children, planning, environmental health, and finance.

North Yorkshire Council's leader, Cllr Carl Les, said: "In one of our largest recruitment efforts to date, we are looking to hire staff to help deliver the key services that make the county such a fantastic place to live and work.

As the organisation transforms, undertakes new projects, and delivering a wide range of services to communities, it needs a suitably skilled workforce, passionate about serving our communities. Be they apprentices starting out on their career path, through one of our many trainee schemes, or skilled professionals looking to build their career. All should be encouraged to look at the latest vacancies to see what opportunities the Council has to offer.

Alongside the varied career opportunities, North Yorkshire Council offers a comprehensive rewards and benefits package, including salary sacrifice schemes, discounts at major retailers, the Local Government Pension Scheme, flexible working opportunities and a generous holiday entitlement.

All jobs and career opportunities at North Yorkshire Council can be found at www.northyorks.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers

The Local Government Association has also launched a dedicated campaign website at www.localcounciljobs.gov.uk

Farming community asked to shape nature recovery strategy

Farmers, landowners and land managers are being asked to share their views on how nature can be encouraged alongside their business.

North Yorkshire Council is asking for local knowledge and expertise in managing land and food production to shape a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for North Yorkshire and York.

Following a series of events in February, it has been developing a local habitat map. Like all local authorities, the council needs to produce a strategy to help address the decline of nature and to improve the environment. The strategy will identify locations to improve nature and provide benefits such as capturing carbon from the atmosphere, flood regulation and access to spaces rich with nature.

The aim is to not only improve prospects for wildlife but help businesses become more resilient to the effects of climate change and deliver wider environmental benefits. It is also expected to assist farmers and land managers access incentives such as the Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs), as well as being a

useful resource on which they can draw on for applications for future funding opportunities.

The events will take place in November and early December and will update on the local habitat map, a question and answer session, an introduction to the Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme, potential funding streams for delivery of habitat improvements, and an update on the LNRS that is set to be published in 2025.

Places are free and limited to 20 people per event and will be followed by a light meal. For anyone who cannot attend in person, an online event will take place on Tuesday, November 12, from 7pm to 8pm.

Places can be booked online at www.northyorks.gov.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy or by emailing LNRS@northyorks.gov.uk stating which date and venue you would like to attend.

Ambitious carbon reduction plans gather pace across county

Ambitious plans to reduce environmental impact while boosting both business and leisure opportunities are gathering pace across North Yorkshire.

North Yorkshire Council is itself aiming to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030, while working alongside York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority and the Government to enable companies and organisations to become more environmentally aware.

Having been ambitious in our pursuit of becoming carbon neutral, we are now taking a leading role in encouraging others to follow suit. recognising that adopting new and innovative measures takes time and money to implement, we are confident the long-term benefits will promote our aims.”

The council is currently installing solar PV panels and battery storage units at a total of 21 business units at Pickering Park and Westgate Carr Road industrial estate in Pickering, as well as at the nearby Sheriff Hutton industrial estate.

The venture has been made possible thanks to a grant of more than £230,000 from York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority’s Net Zero Fund. The fund, allocated by the UK Government following devolution, is currently enabling decarbonisation projects throughout the region as York and North Yorkshire aims to achieve net-zero by 2034.

Alongside carbon reduction, the scheme aims to create a pipeline of net zero projects that will drive economic growth, create jobs, reduce energy costs for businesses and realise further investment for the region.

A further £124,000 of council funds have been allocated to the Pickering and Sheriff Hutton projects. Solar PV, or photovoltaic, panels convert sunlight into electricity. Battery storage will be added to maximise the benefits of the solar PV panels.

Working in conjunction with North Yorkshire Council's multi-disciplinary building design consultancy, Align Property Partners, the energy efficient technologies were installed at the locations after officers identified a gap in the local market.

There are currently no business units in Ryedale with green energy generation, so the introduction of solar PV and battery storage will not only boost local energy security but offer competitive and sustainable business space to support local economic growth. The units at Pickering Park are currently being advertised for rent and would be suitable for a wide range of businesses.

Such projects have benefited from this approach and demonstrate the work being undertaken across North Yorkshire to improve everyone's quality of life, while enabling those who invest in business and leisure facilities to continue to grow and prosper.

In Boroughbridge, LTC Healthcare were helped by the council to obtain a £13,460 Business Sustainability Grant from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which assisted in the installation of solar panels at its premises.

The company has been making condoms and lubricants for more than 25 years, supplying the NHS among others, and was keen to reduce their carbon footprint.

In Tadcaster, decarbonisation work has been carried out at the Tadcaster Community Sports Trust building in Queens Gardens.

The facility is run by the Tadcaster Community Sports Trust, promoting amateur sport and providing facilities for the whole community. Funding totalling £49,900 from the Government's UKSPF community climate action grant programme and additional cash from the Sports Trust enabled the project to go ahead.

Work involved structural roof strengthening to enable Solar PV and battery installation, removal of existing wooden shiplap cladding, installing wall insulation and replacement cement fibre board cladding and replacing old uPVC windows with thermal efficient double glazing.

Additionally, the Trust funded the replacement of all flat and pitched roof coverings.

Tadcaster Community Sports Trust project manager, Peter McNamara said: “The wooden framed building simply wasn’t energy efficient and future long-term viability of the facility was questioned.

Find out more about North Yorkshire Council’s climate change strategy by visiting our website at

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/environment-and-neighbourhoods/climate-change>.

£1 million to be diverted to help fund community-led housing

Community-led housing looks set to benefit from an annual £1 million boost if councillors approve plans to invest funds from a second homes council tax premium to help deliver affordable properties.

North Yorkshire Council is already committed to using some of the £12m estimated to be generated annually by the premium on housing initiatives.

But with the original Community Housing Fund almost fully spent, and the need for affordable homes remaining high, especially in rural and coastal areas, members of the authority’s executive are being asked to invest £1 million from the council tax premium.

A network of community-led housing groups has grown from nine to 24 across the county, including in the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks, which have the potential to deliver more than 120 homes. They are able to take a leading role in the development and management of affordable homes to meet local need. However, outside of the Community Housing Fund there is no dedicated grant resource for these groups to access.

The biggest gap in funding for these organisations is that needed to establish a group, develop a housing scheme and then take it through the planning process. More than half of the projects in the pipeline in North Yorkshire need this kind of support.

The council also intends to work with registered housing providers and Homes England to seek their support for community-led groups, and encourage them to work together to offer advice, support and access to additional funding streams. The authority will also be looking to maximise opportunities for carbon

reduction measures to be installed and for buildings to meet the future homes standard.

The Community Housing Fund was announced by the Government in the spring of 2016. Using stamp duty on second homes, £60 million was given to 148 local authorities to support community-led housing. This funding was directed specifically to areas across the country with high numbers of second home ownership to bring forward additional, affordable homes for residents priced out of their local communities.

Energy-saving upgrades to save hundreds of tenants money

Hundreds of tenants are to save money on their bills with energy-saving upgrades set to be installed in houses across North Yorkshire.

North Yorkshire Council is ready to roll out improvements at 150 socially-rented homes in the latest phase of a scheme to tackle properties which are worst affected by problems such as poor-quality insulation and ineffective heating systems.

Many of the properties identified for the upgrade are in rural areas where homes are often older and have poor insulation – including in villages around Harrogate, Selby and Richmond.

The decarbonisation drive reinforces the council's ambition to be the UK's first carbon negative region by 2040.

The commitment to providing warm, energy-efficient homes has been welcomed by both residents and industry experts – with the council named local authority of the year at the national Energy Efficiency Awards 2024.

Sustainability experts at Align Property Partners, the council's multi-disciplinary building design consultancy, have improved the energy efficiency of hundreds of homes across the county and will be working alongside the authority to support the rollout.

The upgrades have been boosted in part by the latest wave of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), with the council receiving £1.7 million in funding in March.

To be selected for the funding, the council showcased retrofit projects where some of North Yorkshire's worst-performing homes had been successfully upgraded to help tackle fuel poverty as well as providing residents with the opportunity to save money from their energy bills.

The authority's commitment to drive down carbon emissions saw them crowned local authority of the year at the 2024 Energy Efficiency Awards, which was held in Birmingham.

Align also swept to success by winning social responsibility company of the year and finished second in the national energy consultancy of the year category.

More information about support or advice to keep homes warm and energy bills low is available on North Yorkshire Council's website at

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/housing-and-homelessness/other-housing-information/energy-efficiency-advice>.