

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 February 2018

**STATEMENT FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES,  
LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES, CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT,  
SCRUTINY, AREA COMMITTEES, PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND  
LOCALITY BUDGETS****COUNTY COUNCILLOR DAVID CHANCE****STRONGER COMMUNITIES****Community Showcase**

Members will be aware of the 'Community Showcase, running from January through to mid-March, a series of Member visits organised by the Stronger Communities team to community projects across the county that have received support from the Programme.

The Chairman of the Council and I, as portfolio holder, have attended each of the visits so far and we continue to be impressed by the dedication and commitment of local communities to help one another, and to add to the richness of local life. This is one of the great strengths of North Yorkshire and it is right that we continue to recognise and celebrate it. There are three visits remaining and Members are welcome to attend one or more of those visits.

**Essential Life Skills Fund**

Due to its experience of establishing and running grant funds, the Stronger Communities Team been asked to develop the Essential Life Skills Fund, an element of the Scarborough Opportunity Area funded by the Department for Education. The Essential Life Skills Fund will award grants to organisations providing extra-curricular activities to encourage participation, particularly among the most disadvantaged children and young people, which evidence suggests will develop non-cognitive skills linked to improved outcomes. It is expected that the first round of grants will be awarded by the end of this financial year with a further round of awards made in 2018/19.

**Inspire and Achieve Update**

Six months on from the launch of its new investment approach - **Inspire, Achieve, Innovate** - initial take-up from communities has been very encouraging. With 50 applications to the Inspire Fund, mostly from groups who have had no prior engagement with the Stronger Communities Programme. Communities have really engaged with the purpose of the Fund, which is about encouraging people to get involved in their local community by offering small grants to help establish new services, events or activities and increase social interaction.

In January, the first Achieve Together project was signed off. Achieve Together is about building longer term strategic partnerships with communities, voluntary

organisations and social enterprises who share our priorities. Projects will meet clearly evidenced need, will be sustainable and where required, will be capable of being delivered at scale. It is expected that approximately 15-20 Achieve Together projects will be approved each year.

### **Corporate Performance Reporting**

Last year I asked officers to come up with a simpler and more effective way of providing performance information to members. The previous format was often too lengthy, packed with dense and at times very technical information.

The revised format has been used for the Quarter 3 performance report, and is more succinct and digestible. The new format for performance reporting includes a greater focus on the Councils progress towards meeting the ambitions and priorities set out in the Council plan.

We will focus detailed analysis within the report on one of the Council's 4 ambition each quarter, which will mean each is covered in depth once per year. Summary performance details for the other 3 will be included quarterly.

Importantly, we have also retained a quarterly performance briefing at Members Seminars, following the same annual cycle. These quarterly updates are valued by members and also play an important part in ensuring transparency in our performance management, in addition to that provided by Scrutiny Committee's.

### **Refugees**

All North Yorkshire districts have now resettled their agreed allocation of refugees from the conflict in Syria. Hambleton and Richmondshire districts took all their arrivals in one-go at the start of 2018.

Since the first refugees arrived in North Yorkshire in July 2016, the county has welcomed 50 families – 238 refugees in total. Refugees have been resettled district by district over a period of time to enable successful support and integration. The resettlement programme began after the government's announcement in late 2015 that 20,000 Syrian refugees would be accommodated in Britain.

North Yorkshire County Council, which manages the settlement programme, has worked closely with district councils, the police, NHS clinical commissioning groups and the Refugee Council to prepare for arrivals and to support families. The Refugee Council helps the refugees day to day with access to services such as GPs and integration into the community. The Refugee Council also works with specific local volunteers to provide longer-term befriending support. The County Council provides English language support, and schools across the county have worked effectively to provide an inclusive and supportive environment.

A number of the refugees are volunteering in local community projects and support is being provided by the County Council to assist the adults into employment. The priority is to help the refugees settle into local communities and start to make independent lives for themselves as quickly as possible.

## **COUNTY COUNCILLOR LOCALITY BUDGETS**

Since the re-opening of the scheme in July 2017, I have approved recommendations from 67 Elected Members for funding totalling £274,152.86 (just over 76% of the annual budget) for projects that benefit the communities they represent. The new online recommendation system is working well and has made record keeping more efficient as well as speeding up the approval process. The final date for recommendations to be submitted this financial year is 28 February 2018.

## **LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Daniel Harry has taken over the responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services to create the combined post of Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager.

In addition, the Legal Services section is progressing with the operation of the first Council owned Solicitors Company in the North of England called First North Law Solicitors. This company seeks to utilise the expertise in the public sector to provide a professional services to other authorities and to bring income into the Council to protect services. All the regulatory approvals have now been issued to allow the Company to commence operation.

DAVID CHANCE