

North Yorkshire Councillor report January 2024

Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity to wish all a happy and prosperous new year, which given the challenges of the previous twelve months will be a welcome change of tempo.

While many factors that contributed to the spike in the costs of living are now thankfully following a downward trajectory, the coming year will still hold challenges, with NYC facing the existing costs associated with its many functions, be it fuel, staffing or construction/maintenance costs to name just a few of the obvious cost bases. That being the case the upcoming budget will without doubt see the authority drawing on reserves to provide a balanced budget.

This is not the ideal situation but we are fortunate to be in the position where previous years of prudent fiscal policies mean it will allow us the chance to not only deliver the savings identified through LGR, but also continue to challenge our cost bases to deliver as efficient a service as possible while protecting services and initiatives which support our communities and residents.

Difficult decisions will no doubt need to be made, but as ever I will work along side my fellow members and NYC officers to mitigate the effects on us all.

Expansion of childcare to help more parents back to work

Working parents and carers of two-year-old children are being reminded to prepare for the Government's changes to childcare funding from April.

Currently there is funded childcare available for families of two-year-olds who are in receipt of some additional form of government support. This will not change and families should continue to apply for government funding through the North Yorkshire Council's online application form.

However, from April this year, working parents of two-year-old children may be able to access 15 hours of funded childcare. Eligible working families can start to apply for this entitlement.

The changes include:

- From April 2024, eligible working families of two-year-old children will be entitled to up to 15 hours of government-funded childcare per week (based on 38 weeks per year).

- From September 2024, potentially eligible working families will be eligible to up to 15 hours of government-funded childcare the term after their child has turned nine months old (based on 38 weeks per year).

- From September 2025, when all the changes have been introduced, eligible working families with children under the age of five years will be entitled to up to 30 hours of government-funded childcare (based on 38 weeks per year).

To qualify for the new government childcare funding, parents/carers must:

- Be in work.
- Earn a minimum of the equivalent of 16 hours a week at the national living or minimum wage.
- Earn less than £100,000 a year.

This applies to both parents in a couple (so each parent must fit the criteria) and to single parents in a single parent household. Parents must meet the working family criteria to be eligible for the government funded childcare entitlement.

North Yorkshire Council is also urging providers to prepare for the changes so that they can meet any extra demand for places.

Support is also expanding for families of primary-school aged children from Reception to Year 6 from September 2024. The national Wraparound Childcare Programme is the Government's ambition for all parents and carers of primary school aged pupils to be able to access term time childcare in their local area from 8am to 6pm. This will remain a paid for service

Parents and carers are advised to check if they are eligible for the childcare entitlement by visiting www.childcarechoices.gov.uk.

More details about the childcare changes can be found online at <https://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare>

Funding of £2.5 million to transform facilities for communities

Community and voluntary groups are being urged to apply for a share of funding from the Government after a charity highlighted how money secured through the scheme is transforming a village hall in North Yorkshire to safeguard it for generations to come.

Grassington Town Hall, which is managed by a charity, the Grassington Devonshire Institute (GDI), has successfully applied for a £49,950 grant from a scheme funded by the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

The grant will be used to replace part of the building's roof and electrics and to install double-glazed windows and new, accessible doors, supplemented by further funds from Grassington Parish Council, town residents and the Duke of Devonshire, whose predecessor built the hall and gifted it to the town's people in 1850.

More than 20 groups use the building each week from parent and toddler groups to exercise clubs, as well as a huge number of ad-hoc events throughout the year.

The chair of the GDI, Hazel Drew, said: "The building is owned by the parish council on behalf of the people, but our charity runs it and keeps it going. I think everyone lived in fear that if the roof went, the building would have to be sold because neither the parish council nor our charity could have afforded to put it right.

"Certainly, what the prosperity fund has done is give us hope that if we could raise some money towards the costs, we had a chance to get the roof renewed.

"In effect the fund gave us a route and the determination to solve the problem and I cried when I heard we had been awarded the money as it means so much to us."

The town hall's new doors were installed on December 18, with the rest of the improvement works beginning in the New Year.

The open schemes – community grants, village halls and community buildings grants, sport and active travel programme, rural capital fund and community climate action grants and support - represent a combined £2.5 million commitment from the council to invest and improve life in across the county.

More information about the individual schemes and details on how to apply are available at www.northyorks.gov.uk/community-and-volunteering/grants-and-funding/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-0

Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) - Grant scheme to help residents make their homes more energy efficient

A reminder the Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 (HUG2) is still available to help homes that are not on mains gas and have poor quality insulation and inefficient heating systems.

The grant can be used for improvements such as insulation, solar panels, air source heat pumps and smart heating controls. These will help people to save money on energy bills and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

To qualify for the new scheme residents must have a household income of £31,000 or less and/or meet other eligibility checks.

Properties must also be technically suitable for the measures available in the scheme and have a low energy efficiency rating (between D and G on an energy performance certificate).

Private rented properties are eligible for applications, although landlords must contribute at least a third of the total cost of the upgrade.

This scheme is now open and we are working with community interest company YES Energy Solutions who will deliver the improvements to homes.

They can be contacted by calling 01422 880 100 or visit the [YES energy solutions page](#) to find out more. You can also visit our website www.northyorks.gov.uk/hug2 to register your details to find out more about the scheme.