

North Yorkshire Councillors report May 2024

Council refers itself to housing regulator to boost standards

North Yorkshire Council has referred itself to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) as it works to improve its compliancy as a landlord.

The Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023, which came into force on April 1, 2024 brought with it new regulatory standards placing emphasis on decent homes, tenant safety, tenant engagement, transparency and a duty on landlords to highlight any areas of non-compliance to the regulator.

The act's new and updated requirements include more frequent surveys both inside and outside of properties, annual tenant satisfaction surveys and consideration of tenants' diverse needs and vulnerabilities.

While North Yorkshire is compliant in several areas of activity, it has recognised that work needs to be done to meet all elements of the act and officers are now talking to the regulator around plans to improve services for tenants.

Last year, social housing services from three former councils were brought together as part of local government reorganisation and the launch of North Yorkshire Council. Along with smaller property portfolios of other districts, has given the new Council the ability to utilise its resource of almost 8,500 homes effectively in not only managing but expanding the number of social housing units across the county.

The new regulations provide an opportunity to introduce a programme of service improvements based on these requirements and industry best practice.

In referring itself to the RSH and sharing its draft improvement framework, North Yorkshire Council is demonstrating transparency and has asked the regulator to provide guidance for more improvements.

The regulator will be fully briefed on areas where improvement is needed, and the council's planned activities and timescales for introducing new measures.

Locality Budget Scheme 2024/25

I am pleased to be able to confirm the arrangements for Locality Budgets for the financial year 2024/25. These are based on the scheme that operated in 2023/24 with a couple of changes.

- a) The first date for submitting recommendations on Flexi-Grant will be Monday 13 May 2024. The final date for submitting recommendations will be Friday 31 January 2025.
- b) Funding will not be awarded for 100% of the cost of a project or activity undertaken or managed by an external organisation. This means that external organisations will have to meet a proportion of the cost of projects or activities from their own funds or from a funder other than North Yorkshire Council.
- c) Councillors are required to round down to the nearest £10.

All funding awarded through Locality Budgets has to be spent within 12 months of the award being made or returned to North Yorkshire Council. If the funding is not used or returned by January 2025, it cannot be reallocated so it is vital that all applicants have well planned proposals before submission.

Craven Museum at Skipton Town Hall shortlisted for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024, the world's largest museum prize!

Art Fund annually shortlists five outstanding museums for Museum of the Year. The 2024 edition recognises inspiring projects from autumn 2022 through to winter 2023, with audiences and communities at their heart – with a particular focus on community engagement, sustainable ways of working, and demonstration of ambition by reinventing what it means to be 'the best' museum for the audiences of today and tomorrow.

The other four shortlisted museums are Dundee Contemporary Arts (Dundee); Manchester Museum (Manchester); National Portrait Gallery (London); Young V&A - Victoria and Albert Museum (London).

The shortlisting of Craven Museum for Art Fund Museum of the Year has the potential to deliver a range of positive outcomes for our local area, including a boost to the economy, cultural enrichment, educational opportunities, and increased funding and support.

It's a credit to all concerned that Craven Museum has been shortlisted for Art Fund Museum of the Year, a true recognition of the hard work this small but hugely dedicated and passionate team put in.

Danielle Daglan, Head of Culture & Archives said “Craven Museum at Skipton Town Hall is part of North Yorkshire Council’s Culture & Archives Service. The Museum and Cultural Hub sits at the heart of its community and has accessibility considerations running through everything the team does. We believe all communities deserve the highest quality cultural experiences – this is our ethos, and we think small museums have the potential to lead the way in innovation of access and community engagement - we are proof of this and we want to inspire others to do the same”.

The 2024 judging panel, chaired by Art Fund director Jenny Waldman, includes: Anupam Ganguli (Finance Director, Historic Royal Palaces), Vick Hope (broadcaster), Tania Kovats (artist) and Sir John Leighton (former Director-General, National Galleries of Scotland).

The winning museum will be announced at a ceremony at the National Gallery in London on 10 July and will receive £120,000. £15,000 will be given to each of the four other finalists.

Libraries relaunch popular wellbeing bags with new contents

Library visitors across North Yorkshire are being encouraged to take advantage of new-look wellbeing bags aimed at boosting mental health.

The initiative was launched in 2019, when wellbeing bags filled with books and activities were first available to borrow. The bags have since been borrowed by library users more than 570 times.

The new contents include playing cards, a stress ball and notebook, along with a different colouring book, jigsaw puzzle and puzzle book. They also include a book from the library’s Reading Well collection.

The bags can be borrowed by groups or individuals to use at home, in the library or out in the community.

North Yorkshire Council’s corporate director of community development, Nic Harne, said: “Our libraries are proud to provide a safe space, offering vital resources to encourage people to practice self-care and enhance mental wellbeing.

“The bags have proved popular for the last five years, and we are pleased to be able to revamp their contents. This means those who have borrowed the bags can enjoy new additions.

“I would also encourage anybody who hasn’t yet done so to see what the resources can do for them.”

Wellbeing bags can be borrowed for three weeks from any North Yorkshire library for free with visitors using their library card.

For more information, contact your local library. Details can be found on North Yorkshire Council’s website at www.northyorks.gov.uk/local-libraries