

North Yorkshire Councillors report April 2024

Call to register to vote for ‘milestone’ election for new mayor

Residents are being urged to make sure that they are registered to vote so that they can take part in an election to decide who should become the first mayor for York and North Yorkshire.

The electorate will go to the polls on Thursday, May 2, to appoint the political figurehead for York and North Yorkshire to bring more decision-making powers and millions of pounds in funding to the region.

The vote will be a hugely significant moment for a long-awaited devolution deal for the region, and the mayor will oversee the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, which launched on February 1, to introduce benefits ranging from new and better-paid jobs and improved skills and training to more affordable housing.

The deadline to register to vote for anyone who is not already on the electoral register is looming later this month at midnight on Tuesday, April 16, and people are being asked to ensure that they will be able to take part in the election.

Registering to vote also provides benefits as it can help in situations where a credit check is needed, such as securing a mortgage, buying a car or getting a mobile phone contract. That is because banks and other lenders that check credit scores look through the electoral roll.

North Yorkshire Council and City of York Council will be running the election in the two local authority areas. The result will be announced in Harrogate once votes have been counted on Friday, May 3, the day after the actual election.

Alongside the deadline to register to vote by midnight on Tuesday, April 16, anyone wishing to vote by post needs to register by 5pm on Wednesday, April 17. To vote in person, people will need to bring a photo identification. Anyone without a suitable photo ID can apply for a free voter authority certificate before 5pm on Wednesday, April 24.

Details of the candidates standing in the election will be outlined in a booklet that legally has to be sent in April to the homes of everyone who is registered to vote in York and North Yorkshire.

The mayor, who will serve a four-year term, will develop close links with the Government to secure more funding and decision-making powers as the devolution deal evolves. The deal includes an investment fund totalling £540 million over a 30-year term, which provides flexibility to target money to specific schemes on a more local level.

The mayor will continue work that is already under way on projects including £12.7 million to deliver 700 new homes on brownfield sites and a further £10 million to support the transition to net zero, unlocking economic opportunity, empowering business growth and creating new and better paid jobs.

The mayor will also take on the responsibilities of the police, fire and crime commissioner for York and North Yorkshire. The commissioner is responsible for holding the chief constable as well as the chief fire officer to account and ensuring their services are efficient and effective.

The commissioner sets policing and crime priorities and oversees the police budget. The commissioner also supports community safety activities and provides victims of crime with a range of services, as well as setting priorities in the fire and rescue plan and overseeing the brigade's budget.

More information is available at www.northyorks.gov.uk/mayoralelection and at www.york.gov.uk/elections online.

Annual road improvement programme gets under way

The vast road network across England's largest county is to receive a multi-million pound boost as its annual surface dressing programme gets under way. North Yorkshire Council's highways capital programme totals £53 million for this financial year, of which £25.3m has been allocated to road schemes.

This includes £5m for the surface dressing programme, running in April and May and covering 142 miles of roads. A total of £6.7m will be spent on road patching at 300 sites, and a further £13.6m on road resurfacing schemes at 130 sites.

Surface dressing is a quick, efficient and cost-effective way of maintaining skid-resistant and waterproof road surfaces, helping to prevent potholes and extending the life of the road by up to ten years.

The surface dressing programme will begin at the start of April in the Selby area from Beal to Kirkby Whalfe.

From mid-April, it will progress through Harrogate, incorporating roads in Fewston and Darley, before covering the north of the county in early May, from the Darlington Road to routes in Stokesley.

From mid-May, the scheme will cover the Richmond area from Catterick Garrison to Muker and Aysgarth in the Yorkshire Dales. It will conclude in the Skipton area Cowling, West Marton and Cross Hills.

North Yorkshire Council's roadworks map will include up-to-date details and dates of the works as the programme progresses. It can be found at www.northyorks.gov.uk/roadworks-map

For more information about surface dressing, including advice for road users and residents during the work, visit www.northyorks.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-travel/roads-and-pavements/surface-dressing

Schedule for major Kex Gill landslip repairs confirmed

An extensive repair scheme to stabilise a landslip on a stretch of the A59 at Kex Gill, between Skipton and Blubberhouses near Harrogate, has been announced with North Yorkshire Council appointing contractors to complete a £750,000 repair scheme. There will be extended hours and night working to allow the road to be reopened before the end of June following its closure in February after a crack appeared in the verge as a result of poor weather over the past few months.

February was one of the wettest on record and the persistent rainfall has continued to make the situation worse, with further movement since the start of the closure – something that has been substantiated by geologists.

The road, which runs across a rural stretch of the county on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, is deemed to be one of the most important strategic routes nationally as it provides a key link running across the country.

Kex Gill has a history of landslips, so a multi-million pound scheme has been launched to create a new three-mile stretch of road. However, the existing road had to be closed again after the latest landslip.

For details of the diversion route, visit the roadworks map on North Yorkshire Council's website at www.northyorks.gov.uk/roadworks-map

New tariff to maintain and improve the quality of car parks

A new car parking tariff will be introduced from Friday, April 19, as part of North Yorkshire's commitment to maintain and improve its facilities, made after careful consideration of several factors impacting the service.

The cost of parking facilities, including infrastructure, repairs, lighting, and security has risen, and ensuring a safe and well-maintained environment is essential for the convenience and satisfaction of customers. In some areas the car parking tariff has

not increased for more than a decade, with the majority unchanged for at least three years. Therefore, the council will introduce an increase broadly aligned with inflation.

From April 19, there will be a 20 per cent increase across the car parking tariff, which reflects an annual increment of approximately 6.7 per cent since the last increase.

North Yorkshire Council continuously strive to improve our parking services to provide a better customer experience. This includes investments in technology upgrades, such as automated payment systems and the installation of electric vehicle chargers to accommodate the growing market.

Later this year, the council will be drafting a strategy that will look at the parking provision across North Yorkshire to see where future changes and improvements can be made.

The council is also continuing to make investments in active travel so that people can opt not to use their car and instead walk, cycle or use public transport, and help to contribute to reducing their carbon footprint, announcing a £3.5 million boost for North Yorkshire buses with timetables expanded and £1 fares introduced for under-19s, under a new one-year pilot.

Specialist support for children boosted by £1 million in funding

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will be given greater support after North Yorkshire Council has secured an extra £1 million in funding.

The funding from the Department for Education's Better Value Grant was formally accepted by members of the council's executive earlier this week (March 19) and aims to support local authorities to improve the outcome for children and young people with SEND while working towards sustainable services.

The focus of the 12-month improvement programme would be to:

- Enhance transition from nursery to reception years for children with autism/complex social communication needs.
- Enhance transition from Years 5/6 through to secondary school for young people with autism needs and/or other complex needs.
- Educate more children within their local school as opposed to transporting them to special or independent schools.

Improving services and opportunities for children and young people with SEND is a big priority and this funding will improve the lives of families and help to continue to

build positive relationships between parents and their schools. The DBV grant will enable us to achieve better outcomes for children and parents whilst using our resources in the most efficient way. This improvement plan is just one that will be delivered as part of a wider inclusion plan, aiming to bring about positive change for SEND services in our county. Building upon the skills we have in schools and demonstrate to parents and carers the excellent inclusion work happening in mainstream schools.”

Delivering Better Value (DBV) is a government programme being overseen by the Department of Education (DfE) in collaboration with a consultancy firm, Newton Europe, and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).