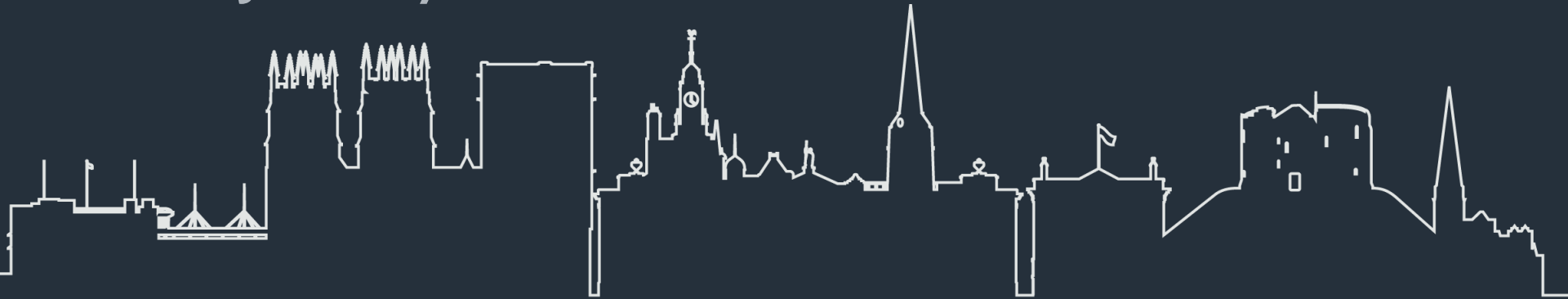


Neighbourhood Caretakers

Economy, Place, Access and Transport
Scrutiny Committee – Tuesday 28
January 2025



Council Plan

The Council Plan includes a commitment to:

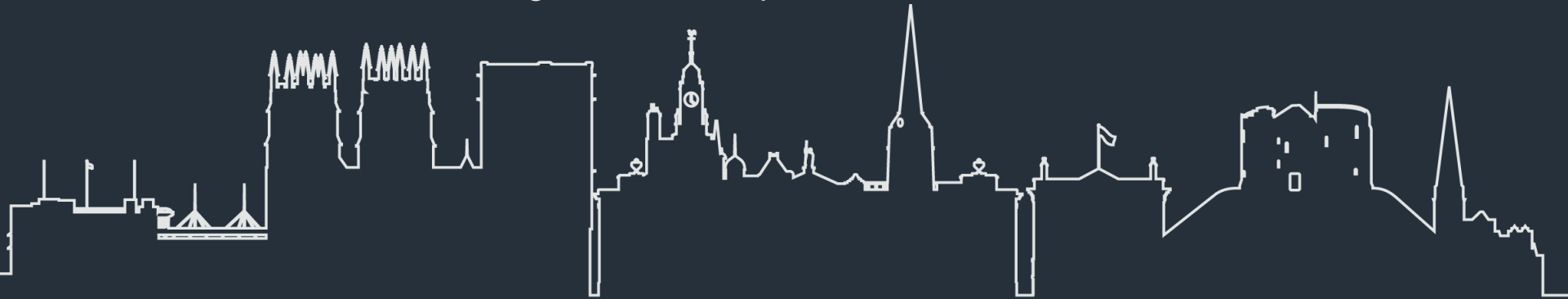
‘Develop a “Caretaker” proposal to reflect pride-in-place priorities in neighbourhood plans.’



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Desired Outcomes

- **Outcome 1** - Delivering a locally proactive service and tangible improvements in public realm for local communities. Developing and tapping into local knowledge and expertise
- **Outcome 2** - Better working between departments
- **Outcome 3** - Working with volunteers in a more creative way to maximise impact; mapping where volunteer activity exists, coordinating City Wide call outs for GBSC and Autumn leaf clear ups at a minimum, and filling gaps where volunteers are low or non-existent
- **Outcome 4** - Supporting resident led initiatives such as Adopt a Verge, Weed Spraying opt-outs and tree planting to help deliver Council Plan priorities of increased biodiversity and climate adaption/mitigation
- **Outcome 5** - Delivering services in the most efficient way possible, value for money
- **Outcome 6** - Addressing Council Plan priorities.



Current Public Realm Team

Public Realm are currently primarily geographically split.

- Staff are currently split across three teams, city centre, then an East and West teams focused on their large neighbourhood area. They undertake the grass cutting, emptying of dog and litter bins, litter picks, hedge cutting, sweeping, de-leafing, rapid response etc to customer reports etc
- All staff are based at Hazel Court except the City Centre team who are based at Silver Street.

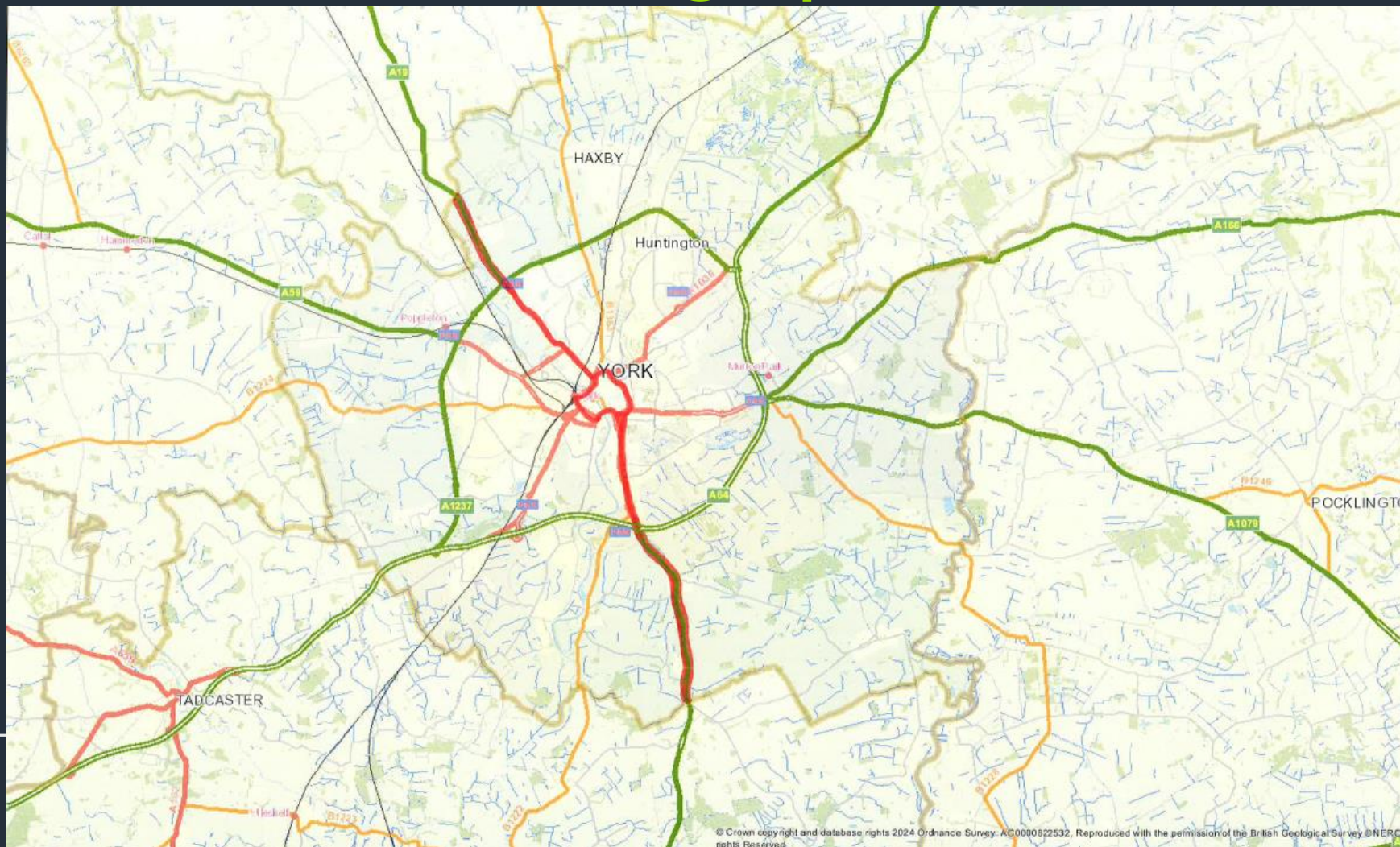


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Public Realm Geographies



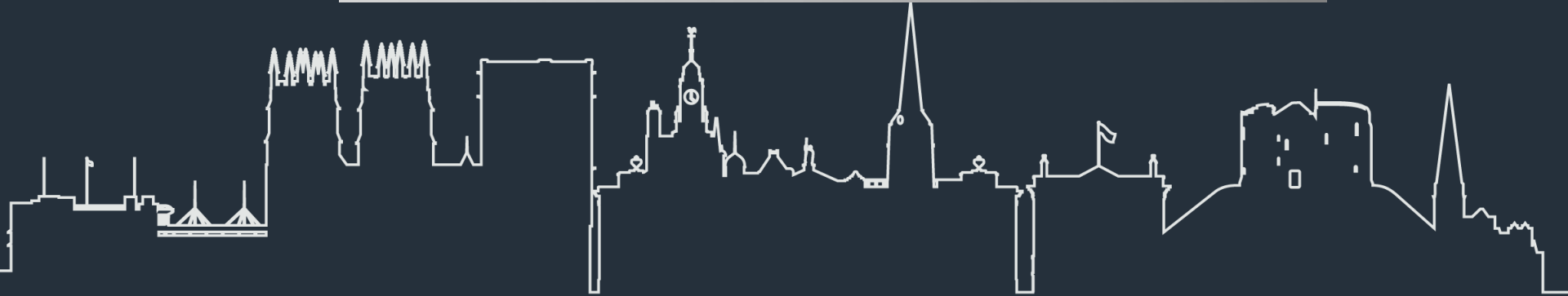
CITY OF
YORK
COUNCIL



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External contracts

- Two external contracts support public realm:
 - highway rural grass cutting using a large flail is circa £30k per annum
 - weed killing contract (quad bike mounted) is circa £56K for two sprays a year.
- These are intensive seasonal tasks at the peak of our own resource deployment, i.e. whilst we are intensively grass cutting.
- These two services also have significant capital equipment requirements, that would not be used for the remainder of the year.
- Trying to recruit seasonal staff has not historically worked.
- As an illustration - weedkilling would require 6 staff per year circa £210k plus the quad bikes at £60k. This service needs very close management given the risks and liability, so would also require more supervision. Contractor is 6:1, public realm is on average 20:1. **Officers do not recommend bringing this in house.**
- Rural grass cutting requires expensive equipment and consequently is similarly **not recommended to be brought in house**



Outcome 1 - Delivering a proactive service and tangible improvements in public realm for local communities. Developing and tapping into local knowledge and expertise

- Local focus, and use of local knowledge, improves pride in place and community satisfaction and enables greater partnership working between CYC and residents, to show that the council cares.
- To be effective this needs to be a multi-agency approach, and the powers and resources best placed to resolve the issues need to work well together.
- Ward councillors and resident voices can help inform this, with shared understanding and support from public realm and Eco teams.



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Outcome 2 - Better working between departments

- The relationship between public Realm and highways is well developed with no silos. For instance, highways inspect the footways in parks and open spaces, highways run the graffiti teams as it is linked with the drainage crews, public realm cut hedges on the highways etc.
- Housing fund the routine maintenance in estates by funding a dedicated team within Public Realm - Estate workers. As part of budget savings these became roaming staff about 5 years ago.
- The current approach on housing could be improved as housing colleagues retain the management, budget and spend decision and Public Realm are in effect a contractor. This can lead to discussions about who does what and who decides etc. Housing and Public Realm are trialling a revised approach in respect of estate workers and areas of focus (this is in its very early days)
- Increased coordination between communities, Eco teams, public realm and housing will lead to better, localised outcomes.



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Outcome 3 - Working alongside Residents

- The City's communities already do some amazing work in terms of care taking of our city, in the form of civic societies, friends of groups, individuals, and also the corporate social responsibility activity of the city's employers.
- Volunteer activity is led by the ECO officers within communities who have an existing close working relationship with Public Realm in terms of the identification of tasks.
- There is an opportunity to expand this work and bring it together, identify gaps in the City where volunteering is lower, and focus this civic effort and a resource and opportunity in these areas, as well as increased attention to housing estates working alongside residents. There was clear support for increased volunteer activity in public realm in the budget consultation.



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Outcome 4 - Supporting resident led initiatives such as 'Adopt a Verge', weed spraying opt-outs, and tree planting to help deliver Council Plan priorities of increased biodiversity and climate adaption/mitigation

- By joining up community requests and priorities with ECO, public realm and communities officer inputs, local communities can be better supported to help deliver local and City-wide priorities as a whole team, working together.
- Areas highlighted by residents include a more bespoke approach to verge and weed management in some areas, and targeted improvements to e.g. playground or community areas.



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Outcome 5 - Delivering services in the most efficient way possible with value for money

- Work already planned includes rolling out 'bags to bins' for the remaining properties where this is viable, 'routing and rounding' to ensure greater efficiency of journeys/fuel in a way that is fit for our expanding city and more closely aligning the follow up of street cleaning after waste collections.
- Officers/Scrutiny to look at next steps in terms of models to drive performance and efficiency, drawing on best practice elsewhere and looking at new models of working.



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Outcome 6 - Addressing Council Plan priorities

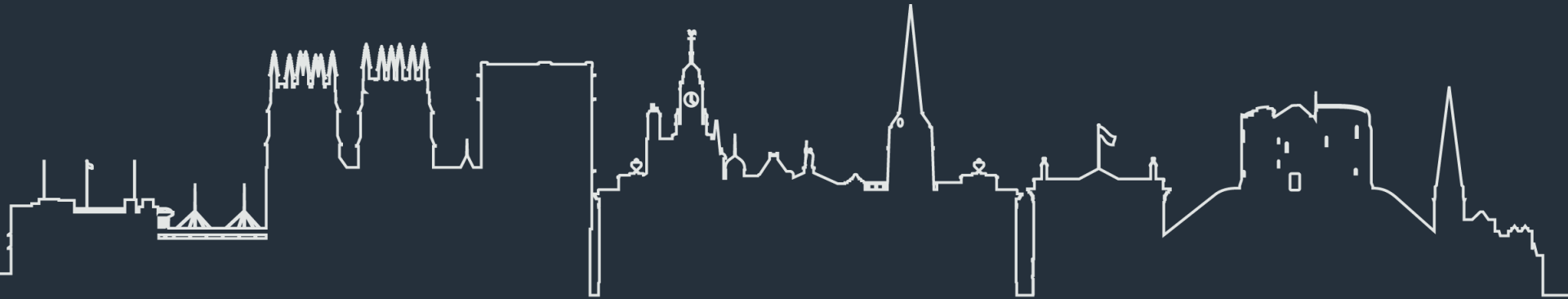
- Active Travel Route Maintenance: some of the routes are not on the highway and can be through parks and open spaces or private land. Their maintenance in terms of surface and vegetation varies across land holdings and we need more consistency.
- Housing Estates Areas that are not on the schedules for maintenance can go unattended and are not always picked up until problems have escalated.
- The Council Plan requires more activity in place making whilst also helping to deliver the Pollinator and Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies with more planting, both of trees and sustainable pollinator friendly plants, and ensure this happens whenever repairs or changes are made to public realm or highways. Surface permeability should also be a focus with increased surface water flooding events.
- Improved resident satisfaction: as evidenced by improvement in % of people who think the council and partners are doing well at improving the quality of streets/public/green spaces.



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Officer Response

- Officers have put together a list of interventions.
- They are a menu of options for discussion.



Strand I – Ward Walkabouts

- The significant benefit of being place based is a deeper understanding of communities and their areas. Underpinning everything is a principle of neighbourhood walkabouts, to look at specific projects or areas of concern as a community.
- This should involve people from across all services, housing, communities LAC's, Ward Councillors, community safety, public realm and highways from the council, also residents, Parish Councils and Resident's Associations, 'Friends of' groups and the police.
- This would help identify issues and who is best placed to respond.
- The walkabout can be done within existing resource, the work as a result will be picked up in other proposals



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Strand 2 - Neighbourhood Caretaker Groups

- We currently have a range of very specific volunteers such as snow wardens, litter pickers, gardeners etc. There is strong support for increased community volunteer coordination in the budget consultation.
- These could be rebadged as Neighbourhood Caretakers or Caretaker Groups, to include many aspects of public realm, as desired by the volunteers, but potentially including weed control, additional verge maintenance, planting, painting and improvement days, composting, community food growing champions etc as well as existing roles.
- The Eco Team could lead the Neighbourhood Caretaker Groups, with a series of clean up days in each ward. Bi-annual Call outs ensuring activity around Great British Spring Clean and Leaf Clearing, at a minimum.
- Community Payback could form part of the activity and become an integral part of the neighbourhood caretaker model.



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Strand 3 - Staff Culture and Reporting

- A neighbourhood caretaking proposal would mean that services would own issues that are reported to them and actively report issues they identify.
- Teams are currently very good at dealing with issues within their service e.g. Public Realm removing a fly tip or cutting back an obstruction when identified. Reporting issues to other service area could be improved. This is easy to do with our webforms etc
- A culture change programme: “Let’s all look after this Place/York” like the ‘See it, Say it, Sorted’ type messaging used by the Rail Industry.
- All members of CYC are clear they are responsible for issues in all neighbourhoods – we all want York to shine.



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Strand 4 - Community Safety and Environmental Protection

Explore whether these staff could become part of the neighbourhood care taking model

Explore using other staff to highlight problems – e.g. parking enforcement officers?



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Strand 5 – A new ‘Neighbourhood Caretaking Team’ across the Council

- Create a Neighbourhood Caretaking team from across the Council, this would be made up from all the teams who currently play a part such as housing, public realm, communities, community safety.
- Their work will be coordinated by an area manager, informed by local knowledge and priorities identified on ward walkabouts.
- This will be a combination of existing staff (who will remain within their services but be matrix managed to deliver caretaking outcomes) and several new roles within a range of services paid for with the proposed budget growth of £150k (as per Exec Papers).
- There will also be an additional mechanical sweeper, meaning a sweeper for each of the new areas (see map).
- The team and vehicles could be branded ‘Neighbourhood Caretaking Team’ to ensure maximum visibility in wards.



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Neighbourhood Caretaker Team Deployment

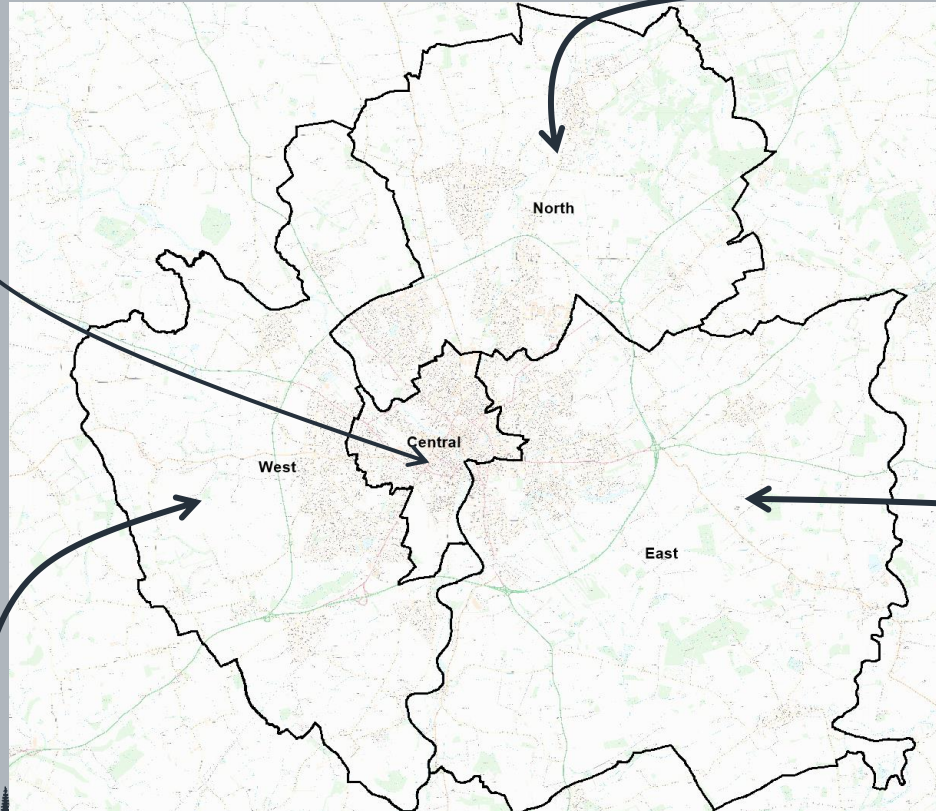
- A model that will tie in with our development of a York Neighbourhood Model /Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (Design principles approved as policy at December Executive)
- A ward walk-about will take place on a regular basis led by an area manager along with HMO/Housing Repairs/Place/Eco-Officer/Police and other relevant parties to identify priority ward improvements.
- These issues/improvements will be then be prioritised for each area (as per the Neighbourhood Model North/East/West and Central) by the area manager and relevant officers.
- If an identified issue can be resolved by a core service, it will be passed over. If not, it will then inform the ongoing work of the new 'Neighbourhood Caretaker Team'.
- The lists will also feed into community action days/weekends encouraging participation in 'Taking care of your Community' which appeals to all ages and demographics, targeted at the lower-level issues such as litter picking, painting fences etc. (with something for every ability). Action days would also include community payback and would be a noticeable presence within communities



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CENTRAL

48,816 population
1x Family Hub
1x Mental Health Hub
11 GP branches
2,538 CYC homes
2x in bottom 20% deprived
areas nationally



NORTH

44,870 population
1x Family Hubs
8 GP branches
19 CYC homes
0x in bottom 20% deprived
areas nationally

WEST

51,345 population
2x Family Hubs
1x Frailty Hub
1x Mental Health Hub
(proposed)
9 GP branches
2,559 CYC homes
3x in bottom 20% deprived
areas nationally

EAST

59,520 population
2x Family Hubs
1x Mental Health Hub
(proposed)
12 GP branches
2,040 CYC homes
1x in bottom 20% deprived
areas nationally



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Questions for discussion

- Given limited resource, how are the issues identified by each ward prioritised?
- With the additional resource (if approved) how do we ensure improved and equitable outcomes across the city.



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