

Meeting:	Combined Executive Member Decision Session
Meeting date:	01/07/2025
Report of:	Director of Housing & Communities
Portfolio of:	Executive Member for Housing Planning & Safer Communities

Decision Report: Transfer of Safer York Business Crime Partnership to York BID

Subject of Report

1. Safer York Business Crime Partnership (Formerly known as York Business Against Crime) has been run by a co-ordinator, funded and employed directly by the Partnership. The Partnership should have its own Board but due to the resignation of a number of members and change in role of others, this no longer exists. In January 2025 the Co-ordinator gave notice to retire as of 31st March 2025. The Partnership has no assets other than a laptop computer but has accrued reserves due to the organisation's minimal running costs. The Partnership's funding is held as a separate account within the City of York Council (CYC) Community Safety Financial System in order to facilitate transactions and support the needs of the organisation. In March 2025, following consultation with York BID, the BID Board agreed to take over responsibility for the partnership and continue its services as part of the Purple Flag function managed by the BID.
2. The reserves held on behalf of Safer York Business Crime Partnership have been accrued by and belong to the partnership through the conduct of its business, City of York Council has no financial control of the partnership. The partnership co-ordinator managed the overall use of the funding and this was reported to the partnership's board in an annual report and statement of accounts. Following decision to transfer the partnership's functions to York BID, a decision needs to be formally made to approve the transfer of the Partnership's reserves from the budget held within City of York Council's system, to the BID.

Benefits and Challenges

3. Safer York Business Partnership supports work to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and more recently to support businesses to protect and prepare their organisation in the event of a terrorist attack. Members receive information electronically in relation to organised crime groups and exclusions from premises that is shared from police systems and regional business crime information and access to a radio system connecting them directly to the police and CYC CCTV Control Room.
4. Safer York Business Crime Partnership evolved from the establishment of the first Business Crime Partnership in 1997, later becoming York Business Against Crime in 2016 and rebranding as Safer York Business Crime Partnership in 2023. Throughout its life, the partnership has depended on volunteers from partner organisations and local businesses forming a Board and a self employed co-ordinator managing the day to day business. Since the pandemic, pressures on the business community has led to board member resignations and having a single co-ordinator running the scheme has allowed no resilience. Whilst this situation could have continued with the recruitment of a replacement co-ordinator and seeking volunteers to re-establish a board, this would be challenging in the absence of a governance structure.
5. The York BID already provide a package of support to the Local Business community, manage the Purple Flag scheme which includes an element related to Safety and lead on the strategic priority of Keeping the City Centre Safe on behalf of the city's Community Safety Partnership, Safer York Partnership. In taking over the functions of the Business Crime Partnership they could offer resilience support and governance and are willing to continue to support the scheme's coverage across the whole city and not just the City Centre.
6. Following the decision by Safer York Business Partnership to transfer its functions to the BID, the only outstanding element is to transfer the reserve funding currently held on behalf of the partnership within the City of York Council Community Safety Budget. If the partnership and its reserves, needed to provide additional staffing within the BID to support the scheme are not transferred, the partnership will fold, leaving businesses with no access to the radios or electronic information sharing systems.

Policy Basis for Decision

7. Safer York Business Crime Partnership is completely standalone and does not fall within the financial or service control of City of York Council. However, the services that it provides in supporting the business community and the police in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour do support the Council Plan's priority of Affordability by supporting economic growth through protecting businesses from becoming victims of crime.

Financial Strategy Implications

8. As at 31st March 2025 the council held £149,924 on reserve for York Business Crime Partnership. Should the Member agree to the recommendation the funding will be paid over to York BID to take up the accounting and administration of the scheme. The final value paid will take into account any further income and expenditure that is incurred prior to the payment.

Recommendation and Reasons

9. It is recommended that the Executive Member approves the transfer of reserve funding held by Safer York Business Crime Partnership to York BID to preserve the valuable services provided by the scheme in assisting the police with tackling crime and anti-social behaviour impacting on the business community.

Background

10. Safer York Business Crime Partnership is an independent partnership accredited under the Association of Business Crime Partnerships. The partnership is comprised of 180 businesses paying a subscription fee to be a member. Membership gives businesses support from a co-ordinator, access to a radio linked to the police and CCTV control room and an access to an electronic information sharing system which allows information to be shared by the police and neighbouring business crime partnerships in relation to organised crime groups targeting businesses and retailers.

11. Subscriptions are collected by the radio provider who then pays commission back to the partnership. This has accumulated a reserve due to the minimal running costs of the scheme.
12. At the request of the partnership, the council has managed the funds on their behalf and income and expenditure are recorded within their own budget managed in the Partnership section of the Community Safety Budget managed by Head of Community Safety.
13. Financial accountability and all other legal and administrative functions of the partnership have remained with the partnership's board which has gradually disbanded due to resignation of members and inability to recruit into the vacant roles. Following the decision by the co-ordinator to retire at the end of March 2025, the partnership was placed at risk.
14. York BID have their own Safe Partnership comprised of key stakeholders across the city and also lead on the city's Purple Flag accreditation. The Business Crime partnership functions would fit with this BID role.
15. Discussions took place with the BID in January to transfer the business crime partnership to them and members of the partnership were notified of this change. The BID Board approved the recommendation to take responsibility to continue to deliver the services of the Business Crime Partnership through its core functions on 28th March 2025 on the basis that the remaining balance of the Partnership would transfer from City of York Council accounts once year end accounts have been finalised.

Consultation Analysis

16. As key partners working with the Business Crime Partnership, City of York Council Community Safety, North Yorkshire Police and York BID were all consulted and in agreement that the proposed transfer of the partnership functions to the BID would preserve the services it provides for its members and also support the membership to grow.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

17. Options considered were:
 - a) Disband Safer York Business Crime Partnership entirely.

- b) Transfer the funding which is linked to Business Crime Partnership to the BID including all remaining funding to enable the communications benefits, links with police and information sharing to continue under the BID's portfolio of Keeping the City Centre Safe and Purple Flag, as the BID Board had agreed to take over the responsibility for delivery on the basis that the funding needed to deliver this would be passed over to them.

18. Options rejected were

- a) Disband the Safer York Business Crime Partnership. This is due to the benefit derived from direct radio link to the police and between retail and night time economy businesses. This work also supports City of York Council Licensing aims and well as contributing to overall community safety and enabling the disruption of travelling criminals targeting the city.

Organisational Impact and Implications

19. Aside from the financial implications outlined in paragraph 8 above there are no legal or other implications for City of York Council services due to the partnership being a standalone entity and not within any organisation or financial control of the location authority.

Risks and Mitigations

20. There are no risks directly relevant to City of York Council. The only risk is to the members of the Business Crime Partnership if its functions were to cease.

Wards Impacted

21. All Wards are impacted as membership of the Business Crime Partnership extends to retailers predominantly within the City Centre but also in other locations across the city.

Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

Author

Name:	Jane Mowat
Job Title:	Head of Community Safety
Service Area:	Community Safety
Telephone:	01904 555742
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	23/06/2025

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

None

Abbreviations:

BID	Business Improvement District
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CYC	City of York Council