

Meeting	Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	4 March 2025
Present	Councillors Nicholls (Chair), Clarke (Vice-Chair), Crawshaw, Cullwick [until 7:17pm], Cuthbertson, Knight, Waller, Wilson, Baxter (Substitute for Cllr Taylor) [until 7:19pm], and Merrett (Substitute for Cllr Nelson)
Apologies	Councillors Nelson and Taylor
Executive Members in attendance	Councillor Pavlovic – Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities
Officers in attendance	Richard Hartle - Head of Children and Education Finance Pauline Stuchfield - Director of Housing and Communities Susan Wood - Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager Jane Mowat - Head of Community Safety
External attendees	Superintendent Ed Haywood-Noble – Police Area Commander for York

47. Apologies for Absence (5:32pm)

Apologies were received from Councillors Nelson and Taylor.

48. Declarations of Interest (5:32pm)

Members were asked to declare at this point in the meeting any disclosable pecuniary interest or other registerable interest they might have in respect of business on the agenda if they had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. Councillor Crawshaw declared an interest in respect of items on the agenda in that he had a family member who was a member of York Disability Rights Forum.

49. Minutes (5:50pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings held on the 3 December 2024 and 14 January 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

50. Public Participation (5:33pm)

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

51. Finance and Performance Q3 (5:33pm)

The Head of Children and Education Finance presented the report and noted that within the monitor there was a £1.2million overspend which was an improvement of £200k from November 2024.

In response to questions from members, the Head of Children and Education Finance confirmed that:

- Vacancies which appear would be flagged relatively quickly and a review of the positions needed would take place.
- At the time of writing the report there were concerns about the council's ability to meet its Safety Valve financial targets, but these concerns had eased by the time of this meeting.
- The statutory override that allows for Local Authorities (LAs) to carry significant deficits forward from one year to the next within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was due to end on 31 March 2026 and many LAs would come under pressure – at the time of reporting City of York Council (CYC) was in a better position than many LAs and the DSG was projected to be in a small surplus by the end of 2025/26.
- Schools in York were budgeting for a certain pay award level and were therefore advised to assume that this would be fully funded by the Department for Education (DfE), some more cautious schools had not made this assumption and were subsequently more better off than expected when the funding was received.

The Head of Children and Education received feedback from members in that language surrounding the term “exacerbated by tribunal decisions” should be avoided as these decisions were needed and effort should be made to not put people off them.

Resolved:

That the committee:

- i. Noted the finance and performance information.
- ii. Noted that work would continue on identifying the savings needed to fully mitigate the forecast overspend.

Reason: To ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget.

52. Digital Inclusion Update (5:50pm)

The Director of Housing and Communities, and the Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager presented the report.

It was reported that digital exclusion was most prevalent where skills, access, and connectivity, and deprivation were issues. The Director of Housing and Communities, and the Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager noted that there was a Digital Inclusion Co-Ordinator whose role was to find those who were most excluded digitally. Members were also informed that for the first time, the Digital Inclusion Partnership had been able to create a clear set of actions, included within Annex A of the report.

In response to questions from members, the Director of Housing and Communities, and the Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager confirmed that:

- Investigations were ongoing into how the LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) database could be used to explore how different initiatives could be undertaken and where to target intervention.
- The right help for the right people was essential – there was an abundance of donations of desktop computers for the IT Reuse scheme, but more help was required with smartphones.
- Organisations could work with the Digital Inclusion Partnership by contacting: digitalinclusion@york.gov.uk, and via the LiveWellYork website (livewellyork.co.uk)
- There was a reluctance to monitor outcomes of the partnership as introducing levels of accountability could deter partners' involvement.
- The partnership would benefit from employing someone full time to strategically pull data together to improve efforts to target intervention, but there was no money or funding available for this as at the time of the meeting.

- Not all digital help was online - there were physical leaflets available with help and advice on, and phone numbers on for people to contact to speak to an advisor for help.

Resolved: That the committee noted the information relating to the ongoing work of the Digital Friendly York Partnership alongside the other digital inclusion work going on in the city.

Reason: So that members were aware of the work undertaken by the Digital Friendly York Partnership.

53. Safer York Partnership Report (6:40pm)

The Head of Community Safety, and the Police Area Commander for York presented the report and discussed the priorities of the York Safety Partnership as detailed within the report.

The Head of Community Safety reported that there was increased scrutiny regarding the Prevent programme following the 2024 Southport stabbings, but that CYC received no funding for this increased focus unlike other LAs. It was also noted that Prevent referrals were the highest ever which was positive as it showed that the system was working.

The Police Area Commander for York reported that there was an increased level of County Lines activity within York in order to ensure intelligence was shared with relevant actors and that work was progressing in the right direction to make people feel safe and reassured.

In response to questions from members the Head of Community Safety, and the Police Area Commander for York confirmed that:

- Numbers of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) had decreased due to budget limits, with some being transferred over to become Police Officers.
- Work was ongoing within different teams, such as with Licensing, to work on responses to drug and alcohol abuse, and anti-social behaviour linked to the nighttime economy.
- The Partnership worked via a three year strategy which was refreshed annually in order to pick up any improvements or amendments that may be needed.

Members discussed the report and provided feedback to officers in that the police force and partnership needed to work more closely with Ward Councillors on issues such as the distribution of knife bins in York.

Resolved: That the committee noted the information relating to delivery of the Community Safety Strategy.

Reason: To update Members on the performance of the Safer York Partnership and facilitate contribution to development of future strategy.

54. Work Plan (7:44pm)

Members discussed the committee's work plan and it was resolved that:

- i. A report on the Neighbourhood Policing Review would be requested for 1 May 2025.
- ii. A report on Clear, Hold, Build would be requested for 1 May 2025.
- iii. A report on 2025 Library Needs Assessment (containing data from the Early Engagement Consultation) would be requested for 1 May 2025.
- iv. An update of the Neighbourhood Model would be requested for 5 June 2025.
- v. That the Children Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report originally scheduled for 4 March 2025 would be requested for 5 June 2025.

Reason: To keep the committee's work plan for the upcoming municipal year updated.

Cllr Nicholls, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.32 pm and finished at 7.54 pm].