
MEETING	HOLGATE WARD COMMITTEE
DATE	17 MARCH 2026
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS KENT AND K TAYLOR
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS STEELS-WALSHAW

1. DROP-IN FROM 6PM

2. BACK PARK IMPROVEMENTS 6:30PM

1. Main meeting – welcome and introductions (6pm)

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Kent who welcomed everyone, set out the housekeeping rules and reminded residents that the meeting was non-political.

2. Back Park improvements

Councillor Kent invited Karen Stafeckis, McLaren Regeneration Development Director and Rob Wolfe, CHY Consultancy Managing Director to outline the proposal.

Karen explained that York Central Developers (YCD) want to give back to the community and have previously contributed an amount of £50k which was allocated in form of grants via the Two Ridings Community Foundation York Community Fund to York's voluntary and community groups supporting purposeful community action and creating a sense of belonging. Further £50k of funding was committed by YCD and Back Park was identified as a location to benefit from improvements. It is understood that that parts of the site are neglected and underused. YCD would like to understand residents' ambitions on how the site could be improved with the use of dedicated funding and tonight's discussion starts the process. Rob added that to enable maximum social impact the project will be undertaken as a co-design with the community and local voices informing emerging improvement proposals. All ideas are welcome i.e. how the site is used currently, what is wrong and what could be improved. St Barnabas School will be visited to gather feedback from families and young people and local groups and organisations will be consulted as part of the process.

At tonight's meeting residents were able to look at a printout of a satellite view map of Back Park and provide initial ideas using post it notes.

Q – What is the timescale of the project?

A – A brief will be created by the summer, using feedback form tonight and other planned engagement sessions. Following that we will work with our

in-house design team with the view to deliver the project at approximately this time next year. Decades ago, Back Park was donated by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to the City of York Council (CYC) who are now responsible for its upkeep. The intention is to work together with CYC to deliver the project.

Q - Cllr Taylor added that the amount of £50k offered by YCD towards the project should be used as effectively as possible to maximise the community benefit. He asked if YCD are able to commission contractors directly, or will have to go via the CYC procurement process?

A - Karen replied that this is being discussed with CYC. The preferred route would be to involve designers and manufacturers who are appointed directly by YCD, as opposed to going through the public procurement process.

Q – Will you be consulting with all demographics and asking everyone how Back Park is used?

A – Yes, the intention is to speak with as many people as possible to inform improvements which appeal to and are accessible to everybody.

A comment was made that Back Park is a great asset, however it is not maintained as it should be. The play equipment section is fine, however the entrance from Balfour Street feels intimidating with overshadowing trees and walls creating division. It has been badly designed from the physical appearance perspective. Could the trees be thinned out to make it a bit brighter?

A – We will work with our designers on how suggestions such as this could be achieved.

Another comment was made that trees are important, especially with the progressing climate change and the shaded areas are important and make the space look inviting.

A suggestion was made that YCD visit West Bank Park to see the Pavilion, which is open to the public on certain days. Refreshments and ice cream are being served to take away during after school hours, making it very popular with the community. Perhaps a similar community café could be built at Back Park?

A – Thank you for the suggestion. We will visit West Bank Park to see the café.

Q – Are there any plans to invest in other areas?

A – Back Park was identified for this second investment. Previously we have awarded funding to 30 local organisations via the Two Ridings Community Foundation York Community Fund. We would like to focus on

Back Park and see it to completion before any other commitments are made.

A comment was made by representative from the West Bank Park Bowling Association that their application to the Two Ridings Community Foundation York Community Fund was turned down which was very disappointing. The Association runs two bowling rinks which accommodate four bowling clubs. Everyone is volunteering and there are no paid members of staff. Refreshments are being served at very affordable prices, and the warm space session attracts over 30 people. It is a great way for people to socialise with each other.

At this point Karen and Rob thanked everyone for their contributions and offered to stay until the end of the meeting to gather further feedback and answer any other questions.

3. WARD FUNDING AND PRIORITIES 7PM

Representatives from some of the groups which received ward funding over the last financial year were present and Cllr Kent invited them to say few words about their project and experience of ward funding.

Alan Slater, West Bank Park Bowling Association took on the role of the treasurer in November 2021. There are four clubs that use West Bank Park bowling greens. Activities are subsidised from sale of refreshments from the Pavilion. Annual running costs of the bowling are circa £40k. Ward funding has been provided over the years to help with purchase of equipment such as pushers, dewy or installation of accessible gates. Without this support those improvements would not be possible Grass cutting machines require regular maintenance. New grass cutter costs circa £5k and a replacement cutting cassette is worth approximately £1k. The recent application to the Two Ridings Community Foundation York Community Fund was not successful and turned down on the grounds of insufficient collaboration. This was very disappointing for the Club, as it was felt that evidence of collaboration between four clubs using the greens and community volunteers should be sufficient.

The most recent improvement work was repair to the concrete gutters around bowling greens, and the next fundraising target will be purchase of a new 'Dennis' type grass cutter. The club relies on fundraising and without sufficient income it will have to fold, similarly to no longer existing club at Clarence Gardens.

Malcolm Britton, York Railway Bowls and Social Club echoed the preceding speaker experiences of running a bowling club. The Club tries to keep the fees low to retain and encourage new membership. The Club separated from York RI some years ago via asset transfer process.

Maintenance of the grounds also involves mature trees, which can be costly to look after. The Club received financial support from the ward towards the clubhouse accessibility improvements. Attempts were made to apply for funding from other grant giving bodies, but it is usually a protracted process requiring grant writing skills and you often compete against several other bidders. In comparison, the Club found ward funding process to be much more accessible. The Club is much more than bowling, with fitness classes and children's parties taking place at the clubhouse. Annual running costs of the Club are circa £50k and the green is considered one of the best in the county. Installation of a new ramp and assisted door system have been carried out over the past couple of years to enhance the Club accessibility. Ward funding contribution helped as an enabler to secure match funding from Sport England, the funding body which required the Club to secure half of the funds from another source. The total cost of accessibility improvements was £15k which was funded via contributions from the ward, fundraising at events and Sport England. Those improvements benefit the Club and other groups using the clubhouse.

Sean Heslop, York Railway Institute CIO gave an outline of the organisation history. Founded in 1889 to stop railway workers drinking alcohol and provide sports opportunities. The organisation undergone many changes over the years and even had its own theatre for a time. Pike Hills Golf Club and York Sailing Club have previously been part of the York Railway Institute. Currently the organisation manages two sites - Queen Street with renowned badminton facilities, judo, table tennis, squash, dance and New Lane with football, rugby union and netball. At both sites facilities are available for hire and on a pay to play basis. The Club previously received ward funding towards creation of an exit road to enable Park and Stride project back in 2020. The project allows parents to park their car at the New Lane car park and walk their children to OLM School, which alleviates traffic issues on Hamilton Drive during school drop off and pick up times.

More recently funding was received towards perimeter fence repairs and a community defibrillator. Community defibrillator project is being led by a group of local residents who got together with the aim to install a publicly accessible defibrillator at a location close to Hob Moor. The group is not constituted and has no bank account and York RI CIO stepped in to act as a sponsor and receive the funding.

New Lane perimeter fence is as old as the site and required repairs as it suffers from vandalism from people trying to break in to access the site. It was recommended by the Police to install a steel fence to deter further vandalism, however that solution was not affordable. Repairs to the most damaged parts have been undertaken instead. Some of the neighbours were led to believe that the entire fence was to be replaced, however that was not the case. A learning from this project was that clear

communication is key to maintaining good relationships and managing expectations. Repairs to the existing fence were made possible thanks to the contribution from ward budget. Ward grants have been great enablers to make the above projects possible.

Sadie and Cherinne from Poppy's Preschool spoke about Thursday sessions at the Poppleton Road Memorial Hall. Ward funding enabled the project to expand, and covered venue rent, resources and refreshments. The Preschool caters for 18 families and there is no set fee for participation. Voluntary donations are welcome, however no fee approach aims to not prevent families on low income from participation. Sessions are every Thursday between 10am and 11:30 at The Poppleton Road Memorial Hall.

Cllr Kent thank all the speakers and briefly spoke about other projects funded by the ward over the last year, namely: pilot activity morning for parents, carers and their children at St Paul's Church; Citizens Advice York monthly outreach advice service at Lindsay Avenue housing office; activities for young people at the Poppleton Road Memorial Hall during May, summer and October 2025 school holidays; installation of a set of swings and a basket swing at the Sowerby Road play area; consumables for community defibrillators; contribution towards workshops and activity sessions for young people at Acomb Explore during October 2025, February and May 2026 school holidays; community bulb planting in October 2025; Friends of West Bank Park – locking of the park; and currently taking place art based workshops with pupils from primary schools in the ward which will result in graffiti artwork installations on utility boxes.

4. HAVE YOUR SAY 7:30PM

Sean from York RI CIO asked for support with information about any potential funding streams which could help with purchase of their building on New Lane site.

No other questions were raised, and Councillor Kent closed the meeting at 7:45pm

, Chair

[The meeting started at Time Not Specified and finished at Time Not Specified].