
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities
Date	5 February 2025
Present	Councillor Pavlovic (Executive Member)
Officers in Attendance	Vicky Japes - Head of Housing Strategy and Performance

19. Apologies for Absence (10:01am)

The Head of Housing Strategy and Performance gave apologies on behalf of the Director of Housing & Communities and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Co-ordinator (the report authors for item 5); she advised that she would be presenting the item in their place.

20. Declarations of Interest (10:02am)

The Executive Member was asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any disclosable pecuniary interests, or other registerable interests he might have in the respect of business on the agenda, if he had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. None were declared.

21. Minutes (10:02am)

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 December 2024 be approved and then signed as a correct record by the Executive Member.

22. Public Participation (10:02am)

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Cllr Coles spoke on item 5, both as ward councillor for Westfield and in her capacity as Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire & Crime for the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority. After she spoke, the Executive Member invited the Deputy Mayor to remain at the table for the remainder of the discussion.

The Deputy Mayor expressed her thanks to officers for the report, noting the policy part of the wider agenda to halve violence against women and girls and expressed hope that this report would raise both awareness of the issue and the number of people coming forward to report it.

The Deputy Mayor praised the collaborative approach encouraged by the report and the pathways being built between housing, health, community workers and Local Area Coordinators. She welcomed the higher standards for tenants set forth in the report and the victim-centred approach; specifically highlighting that a person did not need to have reported an incident to the police in order to receive support as a victim of Domestic Abuse, and the report suggested that perpetrators should be encouraged to move where appropriate, since the onus should not be on the victim.

The Deputy Mayor stated that she looked forward to working on the policy with the Executive Member and would also be working with colleagues across North Yorkshire under the Combined Authority.

23. City of York Council Domestic Abuse Resident and Tenant Policy (10:09am)

The Head of Housing Strategy and Performance presented the report. She advised that both the North Yorkshire and City of York Local Authorities had agreed to work towards Housing Alliance accreditation with this report.

She stated that City of York Council had consulted with a range of partners and stakeholders to produce the foundation for the Department's response to residents disclosing domestic abuse. Historically people disclosing domestic abuse had not always been believed so the key branding on this was that the Council would take a position of belief, and no longer would the police or a doctor have to be involved, or would the victim require documentary evidence, and the Council's initial Position would always be that of belief if someone discloses.

She stated that this "person-centered" solution was very important; some residents may naturally wish to move because their house had memories associated which would lead them toward a fresh start but it was also important to recognise those who wished to stay in their home, so that they would be supported to stay safely through Sanctuary schemes. She advised that partners like IDAS would help identify the measures most appropriate and then the authority would look to support people to maintain their tenancy.

The Executive Member thanked officers and the Deputy Mayor, and expressed particular thanks to the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Coordinator, noting how much work she had put into the report and how committed she had been to putting City York Council in a better place. He noted that there was still stigma, with a significant level of under-reporting, meaning a duty fell to councillors and partner organisations to understand the great pressures facing victims, and it was very encouraging to see the authority moving to a culture which enabled rather than obstructed this. He commended that this was a countywide initiative and stated it was positive and in the interests of families wishing to move that the council was working alongside colleagues in North Yorkshire.

The Executive Member advised that he would further raise this issue with the Police and Crime Panel on Thursday, 6 February 2025. He said that he was glad to see coercive control and financial exploitation given parity with other forms of abuse under the policy. He said he wished to see this policy embedded and that was why he had requested 6-monthly updates.

The Head of Housing Strategy and Performance responded that updates would initially be brought before scrutiny, but anything with financial implications would come to the Executive Member directly for a decision. For example, Yorkshire and North Yorkshire Public Health were working with IDAS on the Sanctuary measures, and this would require budget allocation and therefore input from the Executive Member at a later decision session.

The Deputy Mayor advised about some of the different scenarios and pathways that residents may experience and how the new policy improves things for these residents (living in self-funded private accommodation but still needing a route out; under a council tenancy with significant housing demand across the city; as a joint tenant or an owner-occupier).

The Head of Housing Strategy and Performance noted that the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Coordinator had prepared training sessions for housing staff on different scenarios, and these had been very well received. Housing options workers typically approached by residents wishing to discuss their housing circumstances had received this training and staff were being made aware of signs of coercive and financial control and how to respond to these appropriately.

The Deputy Mayor agreed with the Executive Member that this was “the start of a journey” and there would be many challenges, but assured those present that a collaborative approach would be adopted with the full support of North Yorkshire Council, the Combined Authority, outside agencies and North Yorkshire Police.

This said, the Executive Member

Resolved:

- i. To approve the Domestic Abuse Resident and Tenant Policy 2025-2028.

Reason: To provide victims/ survivors of domestic abuse the best housing response which will contribute to achieving positive outcomes supporting them to lead happy confident and safe futures, while meeting legislation and strategic requirements.

- ii. To approve the publication of the Domestic Abuse Resident and Tenant Policy 2025 - 2028.

Reason: To raise the profile and awareness to the public of the positive changes introduced to best support victims/survivors of domestic abuse. This will further awareness raising of domestic abuse, the impacts on those affected by domestic abuse, the support available and the councils' actions and response. This will provide reassurance and confidence to all residents of York including staff implementing this practice.

- iii. To approve that 6-monthly updates be provided to the executive member on the progress and implementation of this policy and the Domestic abuse housing alliance (DAHA) action plan.

Reason: To provide the executive member with confidence on the implementation of this policy across the housing service. This will also support with addressing the challenges set out in this report and collectively holding the housing service accountable to achieving the successful introduction and embedment of the policy.

Cllr M Pavlovic, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.35 am].