

Notice of a public meeting of Executive

To: Councillors Douglas (Chair), Kilbane (Vice-Chair), Kent, Lomas, Pavlovic, Ravilious, Steels-Walshaw and Webb

Date: Tuesday, 11 March 2025

Time: 4.30 pm

Venue: West Offices - Station Rise, York YO1 6GA

A G E N D A

Notice to Members – Post Decision Calling In:

Members are reminded that, should they wish to call in any decisions made on items* on this agenda, notice must be given to Democratic Services by **4:00 pm on Tuesday 18 March 2025**.

*With the exception of matters that have been the subject of a previous call in, require Full Council approval or are urgent, which are not subject to the call-in provisions. Any called in items will be considered by the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee.

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive and note apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, Members and co-opted members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest, or other registerable interest, they might have in respect of business on this agenda, if they have not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. The disclosure must include the nature of the interest.

An interest must also be disclosed in the meeting when it becomes apparent to the member during the meeting.

- (1) *Members must consider their interests, and act according to the following:*

Type of Interest	You must
<i>Disclosable Pecuniary Interests</i>	<i>Disclose the interest, not participate in the discussion or vote, and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a dispensation.</i>
<i>Other Registrable Interests (Directly Related)</i> OR <i>Non-Registrable Interests (Directly Related)</i>	<i>Disclose the interest; speak on the item <u>only if</u> the public are also allowed to speak, but otherwise not participate in the discussion or vote, and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a dispensation.</i>
<i>Other Registrable Interests (Affects)</i> OR <i>Non-Registrable Interests (Affects)</i>	<i>Disclose the interest; remain in the meeting, participate and vote <u>unless</u> the matter affects the financial interest or well-being: (a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interest or well-being of a majority of inhabitants of the affected ward; and (b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest. In which case, speak on the item <u>only if</u> the public are also allowed to speak, but otherwise do not participate in the discussion or vote, and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a</i>

	<i>dispensation.</i>
--	----------------------

- (2) *Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to the Member concerned or their spouse/partner.*
- (3) *Members in arrears of Council Tax by more than two months must not vote in decisions on, or which might affect, budget calculations, and must disclose at the meeting that this restriction applies to them. A failure to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence under section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.*

3. Minutes (Pages 7 - 18)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 21 January 2025.

4. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered to speak can do so. Members of the public may speak on agenda items or on matters within the remit of the Executive.

Please note that our registration deadlines are set as 2 working days before the meeting, in order to facilitate the management of public participation at our meetings. The deadline for registering at this meeting is 5:00pm on 7 March 2025.

To register to speak please visit www.york.gov.uk/AttendCouncilMeetings to fill in an online registration form. If you have any questions about the registration form or the meeting, please contact Democratic Services. Contact details can be found at the foot of this agenda.

Webcasting of Public Meetings

Please note that, subject to available resources, this meeting will be webcast including any registered public speakers who have given their permission. The meeting can be viewed live and on demand at www.york.gov.uk/webcasts.

During coronavirus, we made some changes to how we ran council meetings, including facilitating remote participation by public speakers. See our updates (www.york.gov.uk/COVIDDemocracy) for more information on meetings and decisions.

- 5. Forward Plan** (Pages 19 - 20)
To receive details of those items that are listed on the Forward Plan for the next two Executive meetings.
- 6. Fostering Framework** (Pages 21 - 56)
This report sets out proposals to introduce a new fostering fee framework, which will aim to supersede the existing one. This has been widely consulted on with both foster carers and fostering staff. The outcome of these consultations has resulted in these proposed changes.
- 7. Residential Retrofit – grant funding opportunities to accelerate delivery** (Pages 57 - 82)
This report seeks decisions to deliver further retrofit works in the private and social housing sector as well as supporting future retrofit activity through advice and support.
- 8. Adoption and implementation of the York Poverty Truth Commission's Charter for Organisation Standards** (Pages 83 - 98)
This report explains the work undertaken by the York Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) and how it led to the creation of the Commission's Charter and Organisational Standards. These aim to promote dignity and respect for those facing poverty.
- 9. Review of the City of York Council Scrutiny Function** (Pages 99 - 128)
This report provides Executive with the final Centre for Governance and Scrutiny recommendations following the Scrutiny Impact Review, and a proposed action plan to address each of the recommendations, for members' consideration.
- 10. Urgent Business**
Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democratic Services officer:

Name: Robert Flintoft

Contact details:

- Telephone – (01904) 555704
- E-mail – Robert.flintoft@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

Alternative formats

If you require this document in an alternative language or format (e.g. large print, braille, Audio, BSL or Easy Read) you can:



Email us at: cycaccessteam@york.gov.uk



Call us: **01904 551550** and customer services will pass your request onto the Access Team.



Use our BSL Video Relay Service:
www.york.gov.uk/BSLInterpretingService

Select 'Switchboard' from the menu.



We can also translate into the following languages:

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی میا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

Meeting	Executive
Date	21 January 2025
Present	Councillors Douglas (Chair), Kilbane (Vice-Chair), Kent, Lomas, Pavlovic, Ravilious and Steels-Walshaw
In Attendance	Councillor Ayre
Officers in Attendance	Ian Floyd – Chief Operating Officer Bryn Roberts – Director of Governance Debbie Mitchell – Director of Finance
Apologies	Councillors Webb

Part A Minute**70. Declarations of Interest (16:31)**

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. None were declared.

71. Minutes (16:31)

Resolved: That the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 12 December 2024 be approved and then signed by the Chair as a correct record.

72. Public Participation (16:32)

It was reported that there had been 5 registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Mr Richardson stated that he believed the Council was overcharging on the Adult Social Care Precept on Council tax.

Andrew Dickinson stated that the Council was putting up taxes on hard pressed residents and business and stated that he believed the Council was financially mismanaged and asked for a city-wide referendum on the budget.

Andrew Lowson, Executive Director of York BID, stated that the tourism industry didn't feel consulted enough on a tourism tax. He stated that improvements were needed on partnership working with businesses and the Council. He also said that businesses were concerned about parking price rises and that people could go to other towns and cities for cheaper parking.

Andy D'Agorne stated that the Council had promised to get York moving again but raised concerns that bus service improvements were moving too slowly. He stated that the rising of the bus ticket price cap was going to hurt residents.

Cllr Fenton discussed the proposed £20,000 for a study into how to deliver Dial and Ride. He raised his concern that progress on delivering a service was too slow and if any new service is in spring or summer 2026 that would be two-and half-year gap where a service wasn't provided. He noted the scrutiny task group on dial and ride whose report had not yet been considered by Executive and asked that priority was given to delivering a dial and ride service.

73. Forward Plan (16:52)

Members received and noted details of the items that were on the Forward Plan for the next two Executive meetings at the time the agenda was published.

74. Finance & performance Monitor 3 (16:53)

The Director of Finance introduced the report as well as the reports for the Capital Programme – Monitor 3 2024/25 and Treasury Management Quarter 3 report and Prudential Indicators 2024/25. She highlighted the progress made to date at reducing the Council's forecast overspend and noted the need for continued work to further reduce that overspend.

The Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality, and Inclusion emphasised the work that had been undertaken by the Executive and Council

officers to bring the Council's overspend down and control budgets. She noted that the reprofiling of the Capital Budget had allowed the Council to assess what projects were deliverable and had prevented the Council from borrowing additional money for projects when interest rates were high. She highlighted the challenge of predicting budgets with high costs in areas such as social care where individual complex cases can cost over £1 million a year. She noted that the Executive had reduced the Council's overspend from £11 million to £2.6 million and expected the overspend to continue to shrink in future years.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economy & Culture stated that the Executive had taken tough decisions to improve the city's finances. He also pointed to positive growth in tourists using York's hotels, an increase in footfall, and an increase in bus patronage.

Resolved:

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

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

75. Capital Programme Update Monitor 3 (16:53)

This item was discussed as part of the discussion under Minute 74. Finance & performance Monitor 3. Please see that minute for more detail.

Resolved:

- i. Noted the 2024/25 revised budget of £102.847m as set out in paragraph 11 and Table 1;
- ii. Approved the recommended actions around the Transport Major Schemes detailed in paragraph 81;
- iii. Noted the restated capital programme for 2024/25 – 2028/29 as set out in Annex 1.

Reason: to enable the effective management and monitoring of the Council's capital programme.

76. Treasury Management Quarter 3 Prudential Indicators (16:53)

This item was discussed as part of the discussion under Minute 74. Finance & performance Monitor 3. Please see that minute for more detail.

Resolved:

- i. Noted the 2024/25 Treasury Management activity to date up to the period ending 30th November 2024.
- ii. The Prudential Indicators outlined in Annex A (updated where applicable) and note the compliance with all indicators.

Reason: To ensure the continued effective operation and performance of the Council's Treasury Management function and ensure that all Council treasury activity is prudent, affordable and sustainable and complies with policies set.

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the period 1st April 2024 to 30th November 2024, the Council has operated within the Treasury and Prudential Indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25.

There are no policy changes to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 for members to agree and approve; the details in this report update the Treasury Management position and Prudential Indicators in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

77. Financial Strategy 2025/26 (17:13)

The Director of Finance introduced the report and highlighted the key areas which included a rise in Council tax, £22 million of investment, and £6.4 million of savings. She noted that it was a

one-year settlement in light of the governments upcoming spending review. As the Section 151 officer she confirmed that while there were challenges and risks, she could confirm that the budget was prudent and made provision for known pressures.

The Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality, and Inclusion thanked officers for their work on the financial strategy and residents for participating in the largest budget consultation undertaken by the Council. She thanked partners across the city whose input had been important in the Council reaching its current financial position. She highlighted that from the consultation residents had been clear in wanting to see services protected and welcomed that the strategy wouldn't require service cuts in the budget.

The Executive Member noted that the Executive had made decisions much as raising parking charges rather than cutting road maintenance. She confirmed that residents had responded in favour of a tourism levy, so the Council was exploring this. She stated that the Executive had inherited a Council that was too big for its current budget and the Executive would seek to find efficiency savings without cutting service provision.

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing, and Adult Social Care highlighted the challenges the Council faced in social care with an aging population and cases of complex needs. She welcomed the investment in the budget to support elderly, disabled, and residents with complex needs and help meet what was the Council's statutory duty.

The Executive Member for Transport welcomed the £20,000 of funding of a study for how a dial and ride service could be delivered. She noted that the increase in parking charges and use of dynamic pricing at peak times would help improve highways and transport in the city. She also confirmed that the levelling out of prices across all York's car parks would ensure no one needed to search for the cheapest car park and after consultation with business the Council had agreed to a 30% discount for minster badge holders.

The Executive Leader stated that the Council had made a great array of improvements. She highlighted with a better settlement

from government the Council had been able to double its hardship fund to support residents with the cost of living.

Resolved:

- i. Approved the average rent increase of 2.7% to be applied to all rents for 2025/26.

Reason: To ensure the ongoing financial stability of the HRA and allow work on improving the quality of the council's affordable housing to continue.

- ii. Approved the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy set out in annex 9 and the Hardship Policy set out in annex 10.

Reason: To ensure policies reflect the latest statutory guidance.

78. Capital Budget 2025/26 to 2029/30 (17:41)

The Director of Finance introduced the reports on the Capital Budget 2025/26 to 2029/30 and the Capital & Investment Strategy. She confirmed that £61 million would be added to the capital budget to fund an additional year of capital investment. She also outlined that the Council has included a policy on the flexible use of capital receipts to fund transformation.

The Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality, and Inclusion outlined the importance of the capital budget which allowed the Council to invest in new projects and maintain the Council's assets both historic and modern. She stated that the Executive had to review the Council's capital projects of the previous administration to ensure projects that they use grant funding and borrowing would be deliverable.

The Executive Member for Housing, Planning, and Safer Communities spoke on the Housing Revenue Account and highlighted the additional funding for repairs which had brought down the time a Council property was a void. He noted that these improvements brought in additional funding to the Council and helped address housing needs.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economy & Culture stated that the Executive maintained the ambition for duelling the outer ring road. However, he noted that with the high cost of construction the Council's first priority would be to deliver the connections needed for strategic development sites in the local plan while the Council would seek funding for the additional work on the outer ring road.

79. Capital & Investment Strategy (17:41)

This item was discussed as part of the discussion under Minute 78. Capital Budget 2025/26 to 2029/30. Please see that minute for more detail.

80. Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26 - 2029/30 (17:57)

The Director of Finance introduced the report and confirmed that there was nothing that needed to be specifically highlighted and that the report would be considered by the Council's Audit and Governance committee prior to going to Budget Council.

Part B Minute – Matters Recommended to Council

75. Capital Programme Update Monitor 3 (16:53)

This item was discussed as part of the discussion under Minute 74. Finance & performance Monitor 3. Please see that minute for more detail.

Recommended:

- i. Recommend to Full Council the adjustments resulting in a decrease in the 2024/25 budget of £20.923m as detailed in the report;

Reason: to enable the effective management and monitoring of the Council's capital programme.

77. Financial Strategy 2025/26 (17:13)

The Director of Finance introduced the report and highlighted the key areas which included a rise in Council tax, £22 million of investment, and £6.4 million of savings. She noted that it was a one-year settlement in light of the governments upcoming spending review. As the Section 151 officer she confirmed that while there were challenges and risks, she could confirm that the budget was prudent and made provision for known pressures.

The Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality, and Inclusion thanked officers for their work on the financial strategy and residents for participating in the largest budget consultation undertaken by the Council. She thanked partners across the city whose input had been important in the Council reaching its current financial position. She highlighted that from the consultation residents had been clear in wanting to see services protected and welcomed that the strategy wouldn't require service cuts in the budget.

The Executive Member noted that the Executive had made decisions much as raising parking charges rather than cutting road maintenance. She confirmed that residents had responded in favour of a tourism levy, so the Council was exploring this. She stated that the Executive had inherited a Council that was too big for its current budget and the Executive would seek to find efficiency savings without cutting service provision.

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing, and Adult Social Care highlighted the challenges the Council faced in social care with an aging population and cases of complex needs. She welcomed the investment in the budget to support elderly, disabled, and residents with complex needs and help meet what was the Council's statutory duty.

The Executive Member for Transport welcomed the £20,000 of funding of a study for how a dial and ride service could be delivered. She noted that the increase in parking charges and use of dynamic pricing at peak times would help improve highways and transport in the city. She also confirmed that the levelling out of prices across all York's car parks would ensure no one needed to search for the cheapest car park and after

consultation with business the Council had agreed to a 30% discount for minster badge holders.

The Executive Leader stated that the Council had made a great array of improvements. She highlighted with a better settlement from government the Council had been able to double its hardship fund to support residents with the cost of living.

Recommended:

- i. Recommend to Council approval of the budget proposals as outlined in the report. In particular:
 - a. The net revenue expenditure requirement of £156.921m;
 - b. A council tax requirement of £120.180m;
 - c. The revenue growth proposals as outlined in paragraphs 51 to 53;
 - d. The 2025/26 revenue savings proposals as outlined in annex 2;
 - e. The fees and charges proposals as outlined in annex 3;
 - f. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 25/26 budget set out in annex 5;
 - g. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) proposals outlined from paragraph 141;
 - h. The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Policy set out in annex 7, including delegation to the Director of Finance to determine the costs that can be charged to the transformation programme.

Reason: To ensure a legally balanced budget is set.

78. Capital Budget 2025/26 to 2029/30 (17:41)

The Director of Finance introduced the reports on the Capital Budget 2025/26 to 2029/30 and the Capital & Investment Strategy. She confirmed that £61 million would be added to the capital budget to fund an additional year of capital investment. She also outlined that the Council has included a policy on the flexible use of capital receipts to fund transformation.

The Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality, and Inclusion outlined the

importance of the capital budget which allowed the Council to invest in new projects and maintain the Council's assets both historic and modern. She stated that the Executive had to review the Council's capital projects of the previous administration to ensure projects that they use grant funding and borrowing would be deliverable.

The Executive Member for Housing, Planning, and Safer Communities spoke on the Housing Revenue Account and highlighted the additional funding for repairs which had brought down the time a Council property was a void. He noted that these improvements brought in additional funding to the Council and helped address housing needs.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economy & Culture stated that the Executive maintained the ambition for duelling the outer ring road. However, he noted that with the high cost of construction the Council's first priority would be to deliver the connections needed for strategic development sites in the local plan while the Council would seek funding for the additional work on the outer ring road.

Recommended:

- i. To recommend the Council agree to the revised capital programme of £385.383m that reflects a net overall increase of £60.947m (as set out in table 2 and in Annex 1). Key elements of this include:
 - a. New schemes funded by prudential borrowing totalling £8.150m as set out in table 3;
 - b. Extension of prudential borrowing funded Rolling Programme schemes totalling £24.712m as set out in table 4;
 - c. Extension of externally funded Rolling Programme schemes totalling £11.935m as set out in table 5;
 - d. An increase in HRA funded schemes totalling £16.150m funded from a combination HRA balances/capital receipts as set out in table 6;
- ii. To recommend that Council noted the total increase in Council borrowing as a result of new schemes being recommended for approval is £32.862m the details of which are considered within this report and the financial strategy report.

- iii. To recommend that Council approve the full restated programme as summarised in Annex 2 totalling £385.383m covering financial years 2025/26 to 2029/30 as set out in table 10 and Annex 2.

Reason: To ensure the Council maintains the funding for the capital programme.

79. Capital & Investment Strategy (17:41)

This item was discussed as part of the discussion under Minute 78. Capital Budget 2025/26 to 2029/30. Please see that minute for more detail.

Recommended:

- i. Recommended to Full Council approval of the capital and investment strategy at annex A.

Reason: To meet our statutory obligation to comply with the Prudential Code 2017.

80. Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26 - 2029/30 (17:57)

The Director of Finance introduced the report and confirmed that there was nothing that needed to be specifically highlighted and that the report would be considered by the Council's Audit and Governance committee prior to going to Budget Council.

Recommended:

- i. Recommended to that Council approve, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003 (revised):
 - a. The proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 including the Annual Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement;
 - b. The prudential indicators for 2025/26 to 2029/30 in the main body of the report;
 - c. The specified and non-specified investments schedule (Annex B);

- d. The scheme of delegation and the role of the Section 151 officer (Annex D).

Reason: To ensure the continued effective operation and performance of the Council's Treasury Management function and ensure that all Council treasury activity is prudent, affordable and sustainable and complies with policies set.

Cllr Douglas, Chair

[The meeting started at 4.30 pm and finished at 5.59 pm].

Table 1: Items scheduled on the Forward Plan for the Executive Meeting on 22 April 2025

Title and Description	Author	Portfolio Holder
<p>Local Development Scheme</p> <p>The Council is required to produce and regularly update a Local Development Scheme (LDS) setting out the indicative forward plan-making timetable to comply with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). This report will present a revised LDS for decision. The Executive will be asked to confirm that the Local Development Scheme Update be approved. Reason: To ensure that the Council Complies with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). Previous Executive Decision on 15/12/2022: Decision - City of York Planning Policy Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP) Update and Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update</p>	<p>Garry Taylor, Director of City Development</p>	<p>Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities</p>

<p>Murton Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Report and Decision Statement</p> <p>To inform members of the outcomes of the Murton Neighbourhood Plan Examiners Report and recommendations. To ask Executive to endorse the Council's Decision Statement on the recommendations and consequently, to allow the neighbourhood plan to proceed to referendum. A decision as to whether to accept the Examiner's recommendation and move to Referendum must be made within 5 weeks of their report being issued or a date agreed with the Parish in line with regulation 24A(5) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The report requests that Executive agrees the Murton Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Report and recommendations, and the Council's Decision Statement on the recommendations, to allow the neighbourhood plan to proceed to referendum. Information regarding the preparation and examination of the Murton Neighbourhood Plan can be found on our dedicated webpage: https://www.york.gov.uk/planning-policy/murton-neighbourhood-plan.</p>	<p>Garry Taylor, Director of City Development</p>	<p>Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities</p>
---	---	---

Table 2: Items scheduled on the Forward Plan for the Executive Meeting on 6 May 2025

None currently listed.



Meeting:	Council Executive
Meeting date:	11 March 2025
Report of:	Martin Kelly
Portfolio of:	Cllr Bob Webb, Children, Families and Education

Decision Report: Fostering Framework

Subject of Report

1. This report sets out proposals to introduce a new fostering fee framework, which will aim to supersede the existing one. This has been widely consulted on with both foster carers and fostering staff. The outcome of these consultations has resulted in these proposed changes.
2. This proposed framework is fair and equitable across all foster carers, with the aim of simplifying the different skill payment levels and additional payments that are made. The framework sets out the expectations from our foster carers, as well as how foster carers will be supported, trained, and supervised by the City of York Council.
3. The proposed framework will also ensure the long-term financial sustainability of our fostering provision, by ensuring there is a fairer, more balanced range of foster carers at different levels that can meet a range of different needs.

Benefits and Challenges

4. The key benefits of making the decisions outlined in this report are:
 - To **improve** the overall financial offer to foster carers in York, in recognition of the fantastic care and support they provide to children and young people across the city.

- To improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers by **increasing** the entry level fee and a more competitive fee structure. This will reduce the need to spend on independent fostering agency care arrangements due to lack of capacity.
- Ensuring that foster carers receive the right support and training to support them in their roles and that there is a clear differentiation between the different skill levels needed.
- Ensuring that the sufficiency strategy drives provision by having a range of skilled carers which is aligned to our local needs.
- Ensuring there is a fair and transparent progression process for foster carers through a well-designed and structured framework.
- Ensure that all fees, additional payments and 'ad-on' payments are consistently applied, fair, sustainable and comply with good financial governance.

The challenges of making the decisions outlined in this report are:

- In supporting this new fee framework there will be an initial increase in costs that will eventually level out over time as carers are re-assessed and positioned appropriately on the new fee/skill matrix. This proposal is a short term spend/invest strategy to secure longer term savings.
- This will likely cause some uncertainty and anxiety within the fostering service, both for staff and foster carers. However, this has been mitigated by involving foster carers and staff fully through a consultation process. The proposal also includes **fee protection** for existing packages of care in order to carefully manage the process.
- By introducing the new fee and skills matrix, there will be a reconfiguration of our existing cohort and in some cases, some foster carers may be reassessed at a lower fee banding.

Policy Basis for Decision

5. The Local Authority has a statutory duty under section (22G) Children Act 1989, to provide sufficient homes to meet the needs of children who are being looked after. Whilst this provision can be secured through a variety of providers, the City of York fostering service is committed to providing homes for children in local authority care arrangements.
6. This will ensure that wherever possible, children and young people who are in care and from York, are looked after in York, close to their family, friends, and their connected network. This is in line with our practice model, ***'Building Brighter Futures'***.
7. The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards, as amended, provide a clear framework for Fostering Service Providers, Foster Carers and associated staff with regard to how fostering services should be delivered, how foster carers should be assessed and what foster carers can expect to receive by way of support. These Regulations and Standards are used by OFSTED when inspecting fostering service providers and when inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS).
8. All foster carers receive a weekly fostering allowance when they have a child living with them, which is designed to cover the cost of caring for a child in their care. The entitlement to allowances and the recommended national minimum amount is set by central government.
9. Fee payments are made to foster carers on top of these allowances to recognise their time, skills, and experience. These fees are agreed and set at a local level for local authorities and independent fostering agencies (IFA's).
10. The fees and any additional payments made to foster carers are outlined in City of York, Fostering Fees and Payments booklet.

11. The Council Plan 2023-2027, **One City, For All**, sets a strong ambition to increase opportunities for everyone living in York to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

This proposal will develop and strengthen our fostering offer to both children and their foster carers in the City of York and aligns to our four commitments:

- **Equalities and Human Rights** – Equality of opportunity
- **Affordability** - Tackling the cost-of-living crisis
- **Climate** - Environment and the climate emergency
- **Health** - Improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities, taking a Health in All Policies approach.

Financial Strategy Implications

12. Current Foster Care Provision and Weekly Fee

The City of York Council has 65 local authority mainstream foster care households, which looks after 84 children and young people. There are an additional 40 children and young people living in arrangements that are commissioned from Independent Foster Care Agencies, with a further 74 children and young people living in kinship care arrangements (family and friends).

13. The City of York Council's current **average weekly spend** on foster care is shown below:

Type	Cost (pw)
City of York Council Mainstream + Kinship	£61,698
Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA)	£37,184

14. City of York foster carers receive two types of weekly payment for the children in their care; **Child Allowance** which covers the costs of food, clothing, activities etc and a **Skills Fee** which is remuneration paid to the foster carers for their services.

15. The **current weekly skills fees** paid to mainstream carers are:

Level	Weekly Skill Fee	Capacity fee per additional child
Level 1	£65.08	£32.54 (50% of weekly fee)
Level 2	£173.55	£43.39 (25% of weekly fee)
Level 3	£496.61	£99.32 (20% of weekly fee)

16. Around **90% of our mainstream foster carers are paid at the highest fee level (3)**. This is significantly disproportionate and does not align to the population of young people, nor does it match to fostering levels in other authorities.
17. The **Capacity Fee** is paid to foster carers who look after an additional child and is calculated as a percentage of the weekly fee. This has been standard practice in York for a number of years.
18. A **weekly child allowance** is also paid to foster carers in addition to their weekly fee and is a minimum amount recommended by central government.

<https://www.gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>.

The weekly allowance is designed to cover the cost of caring for a child.

	Weekly Child Allowance		
Age Range	National Weekly Minimum	Delegated Authority payment	Total Weekly Payment
0-4	£170.03		£170.03
5-10	£187.04	£14.42	£201.46
11-15	£213.01	£16.35	£229.36
16+	£249.06	£17.31	£266.37

19. When reviewing and comparing our current fee structure and additional payments we make to foster carers, it was identified that the additional **Delegated Authority** payment is unique to York. It is difficult to ascertain how and why this payment was created as 'Delegated Authority' was developed nationally as a decision-making tool for foster carers to give consent, not a financial payment.
20. It was also identified that the City of York provides significantly more paid holidays than other local authorities as well as other enhanced allowances for the purchase of bicycles etc.
21. This review therefore provided an opportunity to rebalance our fees and allowances, both to ensure that they are fair and proportionate as well as remaining competitive and attractive to new carers.
22. **Our Proposal**
Firstly, it is important to acknowledge our enormous respect, appreciation, and admiration for foster carers in York. The contribution they make, every day, to the lives of some of our most vulnerable children and young people in York is remarkable.
23. This proposal is part of the overall fostering review that has been undertaken this year – '*Making things better for everyone*'. It is important that foster carers are **paid well and paid fairly**, whilst also acknowledging the need to be competitive, the national recruitment challenges and the rising cost of living.
24. This proposal is to introduce a fee structure comprising of 4 new paid levels, with **improved** weekly and capacity payments for all foster carers.

Level	Weekly Skill Fee	Capacity Fee per additional child
Accredited	£125.00	£67.50 (50%)
Advanced	£250.00	£100 (40%)
Advanced+	£375.00	£112.50 (30%)
Specialist	£500.00	£125 (25%)

25. Early Permanence carers, i.e. carers who are in the process of adopting a child they are caring for, are considered in the same way as temporary approved carers in that they also receive the child allowance only.
26. Kinship carers, who have not yet been **fully approved** as foster carers will not receive a skills payment. These carers are referred to as **Pre-Accredited** and have been temporarily approved as connected foster carers and will only receive the child allowance payment to cover the costs of looking after the child(ren).
27. Kinship carers are not usually trained foster carers and have only had temporary approval following an initial assessment. Their full approval is subject to a full assessment, completion of medical reports and various checks, completion of training and then consideration at fostering panel who will then make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.
28. Pre-accredited carers start their fostering journey differently from mainstream applicants in that they often look after a child immediately, this is usually a relative or through an existing connection, prior to being approved at panel. Unlike mainstream carers who can only look after a child once approved.
29. Once approved at fostering panel, pre-accredited carers will then move to Accredited status and will be eligible to claim the weekly skills fee in the same way as mainstream foster carers. This is standardised and accepted practice across the sector.
30. The aim, over time, is to reduce the number of our highest paid carers and have a more evenly balanced proportion of carers at each of the different skills level. This would bring the City of York in line with all other local authorities and will be linked to our sufficiency strategy.
31. The number of mainstream foster care households in England has fallen by 10% over the past three years, despite a rising care population. Therefore, an improved offer is essential if we are going to retain and recruit new foster carers to meet our Statutory Duties to

provide sufficient homes for children that meets their needs and is within our local authority area.

32. The proposal is to **increase** the weekly skills fees and introduce a new **Advanced+** level. This will provide a much more balanced incremental structure to fees as well as reducing the significant gap between the current level 2 and level 3, which has undoubtedly contributed to the significant number of carers placed on the highest fee level.
33. Reducing the number of specialist carers means that there will need to be a fee structure that is designed to accommodate a broader range of skilled foster carers and improve our initial offer in attracting new carers.
34. There is an urgent need to develop the fostering service so that it has sufficient capacity to meet the needs of our children and young people in York, without the need of commissioning these homes through high cost, independent fostering agencies.
35. It is important to note that the average weekly cost of an Independent Fostering Agency care arrangement is **£920 per week**, which equates to approximately **£48k per year, per child**. This fee is significantly more than the cost of our own inhouse level 3 (specialist) foster care arrangement.
36. To put this into context; 10 x children, aged between 11-16 years old placed in an Independent Fostering Care arrangement would equate to: 20 x children living in one of our Advanced Foster Carer homes or 16 x children living in an Advanced+ care arrangement.
37. Adopting these proposals will incur initial costs in the short term, until these measures are fully realised. The main cost increases will be as a result of the entry level fee rising from £65.08 per week to £125 per week. This is essential in attracting and recruiting new foster carers. Based on the current number of carers at this level, the additional cost would be circa **£62k**

38. Second to this would be an increase in costs for those carers currently at level 2 and moving into the Advanced level. That is currently 22 carers moving from a weekly skills fee of £173.55 to £250, which is annual increase of **£87.5k**. This brings an overall initial cost increase of **£149.5k**.
39. These proposed new fees have been benchmarked and will be highly competitive across the region. Once implemented April 2025, we will move to an annual increase of fees from April 2026, in line with the CPI (Consumer Price Index). This will be automatically applied where CPI falls under 4% and considered for approval by the Director of Children's Services and Chief Finance Officer where CPI is greater than 4%, ensuring any short-term spikes are fully appreciated.
40. **Mitigating Costs**
The current fostering allowance includes an additional 'delegated authority' weekly payment for foster carers. This is unique to the City of York.
41. The Fostering Network defines 'Delegated Authority' as *"the process that enables foster carers to make common sense, everyday decisions about the children and young people they care for, such as allowing them to go to friends' houses for sleepovers, signing consent forms for school trips and even arranging haircuts"*.
42. There is no regulation, requirement or valid reason why delegated authority should be considered as a weekly payment. The plan is to stop these payments to temporary connected (kinship) carers as well as fully approved carers, and ensure our offer is in line with the principles of delegated authority as a decision-making tool. Based on our calculations, this would create an annual **saving of circa £100k**.
43. The current and the proposed weekly child allowances are set out in the table below.

	Current Weekly Child Allowance			Proposed
Age Range	Weekly Minimum	Delegated Authority payment	Total Weekly Payment	Weekly Minimum
0-4	£170.03		£170.03	£170.03
5-10	£187.04	£14.42	£201.46	£187.04
11-15	£213.01	£16.35	£229.36	£213.01
16+	£249.06	£17.31	£266.37	£249.06

44. The plan is to reduce the annual holiday allowance from the current offer of 3 weeks to 2 weeks, which is commensurate with other local authorities. This would **save** a further **£31k per annum**.
45. Therefore, the predicted costs of moving towards this option would be **£149.5k** with savings to mitigate this of **£131k**, reducing the total cost to **£18.5k** of adopting this proposal, which will be funded through growth.
46. **Further Immediate and Longer -Term Savings**
As well as rewarding carers fairly, the other primary aim of these proposed reforms is to increase the number of in-house foster carers in York. The City of York Council is committed to children and young people growing up close to their families, friends, and wider connected networks and this will only be achieved fully, if there are sufficient resources.
47. The Fostering Recruitment Strategy sets out ambitious plans to recruit 50 new foster carers over the next 5 years. We are on track for launching the new website and digital marketing platform at the beginning of 2025. Whilst we are seeing an increase in the numbers of new carers being assessed due to local recruitment initiatives, the fostering recruitment landscape is challenging, and there is a need to use social media, technology, and digital platforms to carry our message further and to new audiences.

48. Increasing the number of in-house carers, will significantly reduce our reliance on commissioning homes from costly Independent Foster Care Agencies, which can cost twice as much of what is paid to our own specialist foster carers. As well as being more expensive, they are often outside of York, further away from the child's family, friends, and connected networks.
49. Therefore, whilst the majority of the initial costs are mitigated, there will be continued savings in the long term as a significant number of level 3 foster carers convert from one fee level to another. There will be further cost savings from relying less on and reducing overall spend on commissioned foster care from Independent Fostering Agencies.

Transition to new fee framework.

50. It is important that we **support** our carers through this necessary transition, learning the lessons from other authorities who have undertaken a similar path.
51. Therefore, the proposal includes **pay protection** for the skills fee (*excluding delegated authority*) to all foster carers for the **duration** of care for each child or young person **currently** placed with them.
52. This is fair and provides more certainty in the short-medium term for carers and provides more stability for the children and young people in their care. Over time, foster carers will naturally transition onto their new fee level following a reassessment against our new fostering skills framework. Our priority is not to lose any of our carers as a result of this process.
53. The reassessment would be undertaken using the new skills framework, as well as considering other factors such as individual skills, training, experience and current practice. This will be a fair and rounded process using the same principles as an 'assessment centre' type approach.
54. Once assessed, a recommendation will be made to a panel that will be asked to endorse the outcomes and any recommendations. We

will then be able to recategorize carers accordingly to their specific skills level. Whilst this proposal means having less specialist foster carers, it will result in all carers benefitting from an improved fostering fee offer.

55. All carers will continue to be supported to progress to the next skills level if they can demonstrate meeting the criteria. The only restrictions will be on how many specialist carers we have, as this needs to align to our local need.

56. Implementation

This framework has been modified from existing local authorities who already have this in place. It is a tried and tested framework. Whilst the City of York previously had a framework, this was not robust enough or used appropriately to manage our sufficiency needs.

57. Foster carers will be categorised according to the outcome of their assessment. However, the level 3 skills payment will be **protected** for the period that their existing child was placed with them. All other skills fees will be increasing at the point of implementation.

58. Any new child placed in their care would be in accordance with the fee level following the outcome of that assessment, to enable a gradual transition, over time, to the new fee framework.

59. Where a child joins a fostering household and the assessment has yet to be completed, the existing fee level arrangements will be honoured, but on the understanding that this may be subject to change, for that specific child only, following the outcome of the reassessment.

Recommendation and Reasons

60. It is recommended that the Council Executive supports the introduction of the proposed new skills and fee levels. **This is outlined in option (3) of the report.**

61. In supporting this proposal, it would ensure;

- The City of York Council continues to provide a range of foster care options to meet the needs of children that is aligned to the overall sufficiency strategy, that is both cost effective and financial sustainable.
 - The skills and fee framework are **fairly** applied to all foster carers, with much greater accountability placed on the service and foster carers to evidence individual skills level.
 - That fostering was seen an attractive option for new carers, therefore increasing our internal resources, and reducing spend on externally commissioned fostering arrangements, continuing to ensure that children are living closer to their families and wider connected networks.
62. The current fostering fee and skills framework is both limited and disproportionate in its range of payments. Level (1) payments are exceptionally low and often cited as a barrier for people to consider fostering as a viable option. This therefore impacts on our ability to recruit new foster carers.
63. Level (3) is our 'specialist' foster carers and the fee is very competitive with other local authorities locally and regionally. However, the financial gap between level (2) and level (3) provides no 'middle ground' for carers, both in terms of retention and cost management.
64. There is also a significant number of foster carers paid at the highest rate, which is disproportionate to our local needs.

Background

65. The fostering service has experienced a turbulent time in recent years, with a number of changes within the management oversight of the service, high use of agency staff and managers and uncertainty of where it 'sits' within the overall children's services team.

66. In early 2024, following the appointment of a Head of Children's Resources; Fostering, Short Breaks and Residential Children's Homes came together under one overall Children's Resources Team. The Service recruited an experienced fostering service manager and has managed to fully staff the service with a permanent team.
67. The newly formed team launched a review of the fostering service. The theme of this review was '***Making things better for everyone***' and has been initiated to improve performance, recruitment of new carers, the support and training provided, systems and processes as well as the current skill and fee matrix.
68. This was a consultative approach, working closely with staff and foster carers to identify areas of the service that required improvement or change to work more efficiently. A key area identified by staff and foster carers was the current skills and fee matrix.
69. There was a strong sense from both foster carers and staff that the current skill and fee matrix needed a broader range of payments, as well as improving the entry fee for new carers, as this was considered to be extremely low. This was later confirmed through a comparison with 12 other local and regional authorities where our entry fee (level 1) was the second lowest being paid.
70. There was also broad agreement that there was disparity between the different fee levels and the number of carers on level (3). There was a lack of confidence that our current model was effective and was functioning in the way it was designed to.
71. Level (3) carers (*which are considered as specialist carers*) were created to support children and young people who have experienced significant trauma and where their coping strategies, as experienced through their presentation, creates a number of significant challenges. This is the right approach and one replicated throughout

the country in other local authorities and independent fostering agencies.

72. It was designed at the time to ensure there was enough 'specialist' carers to provide homes and wrap around care for the most vulnerable children. Whilst this was an appropriate and effective strategy at the beginning, the numbers of level 3 carers grew rapidly and disproportionately against the complexity of need. This was largely due to how we promoted foster carers internally through the different skills levels and the significant gap between each fee, which only ever encouraged carers to achieve levels 3 status.
73. The current ratio of carers, circa 90% are placed at this level and does not match with our local need. The pathway to level 3 has been seen as promotion rather than being capped and managed for a small group of carers for those harder to reach children and young people.
74. Whilst the current model is not financially sustainable, it also dilutes the expertise, skills and experience of carers and creates an unfair landscape for those carers who are providing 'specialist' care to this cohort of children.
75. At the other end of the current framework, a recent market analysis of neighbouring and regional fostering fees placed The City of York Council as having the second lowest level (1) fee of just £65 per week. This does not recognise the dedication and commitment made by our carers' in providing stable, loving homes for vulnerable children. The current weekly skills fee impacts on our ability to successfully attract and recruit new foster carers and has been cited by perspective carers withdrawing their interest.
76. Recruiting new foster carers is **essential** to our overall Sufficiency Strategy; how the service is able to manage attrition and how it is able to increase inhouse resources. This will reduce spending on Independent Fostering Agency care arrangements and ensure we

place more children in York, close to their family and connected networks.

77. The level (2) is much closer to level (1) in terms of costs and there is a significant increase in fees in moving to level (3). There is very little 'holding space' for those carers wishing to develop their skills, without moving into a level (3) arrangement or change their working arrangements to care for children due to the low fee.
78. The proposed skills fee framework is to introduce 4 different levels; **Accredited**, **Advanced**, **Advanced+** and **Specialist**.

In adopting this new matrix, it will:

- a) Increase the entry level fee (**Accredited**) to improve the recruitment of new foster carers and bring us in line with other local and regional councils.
- b) Increase the current Level 2 payments (**Advanced**) and introduce a new level (**Advanced+**). This will bring us in line with other local and regional councils and enable us to both retain foster carers and prevent the need to pay the highest fee level for the majority.
- c) Maintain the **Specialist** fee, as when compared to other local and regional offers, this is the second highest fee and considered highly competitive.

Current			Proposed		
Grade Level	Grade Fee - Weekly	Grade Fee – Annual	Grade Level	Grade Fee - Weekly	Grade Fee – Annual
1	£65.08	£3,384	Accredited	£125	£6,500
2	£173.55	£9,025	Advanced	£250	£13,000
			Advanced +	£375	£19,500
3	£496.61	£25,824	Specialist	£500	£26,000

79. The current spend on fostering care arrangements has been defined by the high percentage of carers paid on the highest fee level. The

disparity between the existing levels and the need to retain foster carers has resulted in a disproportionate number of carers at the highest level.

80. The need to develop and progress foster carers in order to retain them has seen a significant jump from the current level 2 payment of £173.55 to level 3 payment of £496.61. The new proposed framework closes that gap and provides a centre ground to make our offer competitive and sustainable.
81. This ensures that foster carers can still progress through the different skills levels and will be supported and encouraged to do so. Although the 'specialist' will have a cap on the number of carers there will be, we will consider those individual circumstances where a child's needs meet this criteria and there is a need to increase the number of specialist carers.

Consultation Analysis

82. A review of the fostering service was initiated in early 2024 and remains ongoing. This review '*Making things better for everyone*' has been a consultative approach to looking at ways to improve our fostering offer, as well as how we support, train, and retain carers.
83. There has been extensive consultation with foster carers and the fostering team in relation to the fostering fee and skills matrix, training, support and additional payments and this work is continuing. Young people, as part of the '*Show me that I matter*' care experienced participation group are also actively working with managers in refining some of this work.
84. The consultation process was launched on 24th April and since then a number of meetings have taken place with the wider fostering team and foster carers regularly through to November 2024, where we agreed on the final proposal. These consultations have all been face to face sessions and additional early evening sessions for foster carers were arranged to support them with their childcare arrangements. A dedicated email address was also provided to

encourage feedback for those carers who were unable to attend, to ensure they had a voice and could contribute.

85. Foster carers have played a pivotal role in the development of the fee and skills framework and their contribution is evident in the finished proposal in relation to the fee structure, additional payments, and the need to have a ringfenced number of carers at different skill levels. They are supportive of these proposals.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

Option (1)

86. We continue with our current fee and skills structure, whilst actively pursuing to reduce the number of carers paid at the highest skills fee level.
87. This would eventually lead to a reduction in the highest paid level 3 carers (specialist). However, this carries significant risk of losing carers altogether by them leaving fostering for York, due to the significant reduction in their paid fee from £496 to £173 per week, based on the existing framework.
88. We would continue to be challenged by the entry fostering skills fee of just £65 per week, which has already been identified as a barrier to recruiting new foster carers. This would result in recruiting less than we were losing.

Option (2)

89. Improving the entry level skills fee from £65 to £125 per week and continue to pursue reducing our level 3 carers over time.
90. Whilst we would hope to see an increase in new foster carers, there would continue to be the risk of losing carers at level 3 as they leave foster for York, due to the significant reduction in their paid fee from £496 to £173 per week.

- 91. There would also continue to be a significant financial gap between level 2 and level 3 payment (difference of £323 per week), which would make retention and progression of carers impossible.
- 92. Our attrition would most likely remain 'static' as a result, recruiting as many new carers as those leaving the service, if not less, not to mention losing fostering skills and experience.

Option (3)

- 93. It is agreed to implement the plan as outlined in this proposal. This would see an increase to skills fees across the board, improving the fostering offer for all carers.
- 94. The new fostering fees would be attractive to those wishing to pursue fostering as a positive choice, increasing opportunities to recruit more carers in York.
- 95. There would be a fairer fee and skills framework that would enable us to carefully manage progression, as well as paying carers well and paying them fairly.
- 96. Level 3 carers would still be reduced over time, through a protected process and those carers who move to Advanced+ or Advanced would not experience such a significant financial reduction.
- 97. Costs increases would be mitigated through the cost savings as outlined in this report.

Organisational Impact and Implications

98. Financial

The initial funding required for this proposal is £18.5k (£149.5k for the increase in carer rates less the reduction in holiday payments and the removal of the delegated authority payments), This will be funded from growth.

This proposal will reduce our IFA requirements going forward (current spend is predicted to be £2m in 24/25) as we increase our local foster carers.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

There are no HR implications as Foster Carers are not employees but considered self-employed.

- **Legal**

The proposed new framework must comply with the “Fostering Service; national minimum standards” published by the Department for Education. The NMS address payments to foster carers specifically at NMS 28 also require annual review of fees and allowances and various other elements but in particular;

“28.1) Each foster carer receives at least the national minimum allowance for the child, plus any necessary agreed expenses for the care, education and reasonable leisure interests of the child, including insurance, holidays, birthdays, school trips, religious festivals etc, which cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with her/him.”

“28.5) There is a clear and transparent written policy on payments to foster carers that sets out the criteria for calculating payments and distinguishes between the allowance paid and any fee paid. The policy includes policy on payment of allowances and any fee during a break in placement or should the fostering household be subject to an allegation.”

“28.7) Criteria for calculating fees and allowances are applied equally to all foster carers, whether the foster carer is related to the child or unrelated, or the placement is short or long term. “

The government set minimum child allowances which are updated every April and those in the report and are set locally at a few pence above the minimum for the upper end of each age group.

The new approach has the potential to be a significant improvement on the current system in terms of clarity, consistency and fairer progression between the skills levels of foster carers with a more

staged progression framework. To avoid any potential inequality in implementation a degree of flexibility for exceptional circumstances may be needed.

- **Procurement**

No procurement implications.

- **Health and Wellbeing**

The importance of foster carers and the contribution they make to families and our most vulnerable children cannot be overstated. Attracting new foster carers in the local area is essential so that children can grow up close to family, friends and their social networks is crucial, so increasing foster carers locally is of huge importance to the health and wellbeing of our children.

Evidence put forward by the NSPCC suggested that living with foster parents/carers reduces disparities in mental and physical outcomes and improves the wellbeing of the young people involved’.

- **Environment and Climate action**

There are no comments to make.

- **Affordability,**

The implications of this report ensure income levels to support the Foster carers and their families to thrive, and to improve recruitment and opportunity for children to be support successfully throughout their young lives.

- **Equalities and Human Rights**

A full EIA is included, which identifies there would be positive outcomes for children and young people in care who have other protected characteristics if this proposal is implemented.

- **Data Protection and Privacy**

The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed following

the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.

- **Communications**

Communications supports the detail outlined in this report. We will support the proposed changes with proactive communications and make this part of our wider messaging around fostering moving forward.

- **Economy**

Enhancing the skills and strengths of the foster care sector is vital to the economic wellbeing of York. York has a strong keyworker care sector who play a key role in supporting the prosperity of the city, both directly and more importantly indirectly – on this case, through providing safe and stable homes for York's looked-after children and young people, keeping them in their home city so they can continue their lives into adulthood.

Risks and Mitigations

1. There are significant financial risks associated with not introducing a fair and structured fee and skills matrix. This will continue to impact on our ability to recruit new carers, as well as managing higher costs for inhouse fostering provision and the commissioning of external provision.
2. There are significant risks in not being able to meet our obligations under our sufficiency duties, as outlined in Children Act 1989 (Section 22G) which requires local authorities to ensure that there is enough suitable accommodation for children in their care.
3. This proposal provides mitigations to those risks by providing local foster care homes that are of high quality and affordable.

Wards Impacted

4. All wards are affected.

Contact details

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

Author

Name:	Martin Kelly
Job Title:	Director of Children, Families and Education
Service Area:	Children's Services
Telephone:	07789396235
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	03/01/2025

Co-author

Name:	Michael Cavan
Job Title:	Head of Children's Resources
Service Area:	Children's Services
Telephone:	07561879641
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	03/01/2025

Background papers

All relevant background papers must be listed.

A 'background paper' is any document which, in the Chief Officer's opinion, discloses any facts on which the report is based, and which has been relied upon to a material extent in preparing the report. See page 5:3:2 of The Constitution.

Annexes

- Annex A: Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) – **Included**

This page is intentionally left blank

City of York Council
Equalities Impact Assessment

Who is submitting the proposal?

Directorate:		Children’s Services and Education	
Service Area:		Fostering	
Name of the proposal:		Introduction of new Fostering Fee Framework	
Lead officer:		Bob Webb - Lead Member Children Services and Education	
Date assessment completed:		05/12/2024	
Names of those who contributed to the assessment:			
Name	Job title	Name	Job title
Michael Cavan	Head of Resources	Dawn Atkin	Service Manager - Fostering

Step 1 – Aims and intended outcomes.

1.1	What is the purpose of the proposal? Please explain your proposal in Plain English avoiding acronyms and jargon.
	<p>The purpose of the proposal is to improve the skills fee payment we make to Foster Carers, for the care and support they provide to children and young people they look after. Introducing this new fee structure will ensure it is fair for all foster carers and addresses the disparity in fees that has been identified through our service review. This new fee structure will ensure we remain competitive and attractive in our recruitment of new carers, in a very challenging landscape. The recruitment of new foster carers is a key priority for children's services.</p>
1.2	Are there any external considerations? (Legislation/government directive/codes of practice etc.)
	<p>The Local Authority has a statutory duty under section (22G) Children Act 1989, to provide sufficient homes to meet the needs of children who are being looked after. The City of York fostering service is committed to providing these homes and care arrangements close to their families, schools and connected networks.</p> <p>The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards, as amended, provide a clear framework for Fostering Service Providers, Foster Carers and associated staff with regard to how fostering services should be delivered, how foster carers should be assessed and what foster carers can expect to receive by way of support. These Regulations and Standards are used by OFSTED when inspecting fostering service providers and when inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS).</p> <p>Skills fee payments are made to foster carers on top of the child allowances, to recognise their time, skills, and experience. These fees are agreed and set at a local level for local authorities and independent fostering agencies (IFA's). Our fees and any additional payments made to foster carers, the processes by which these are administered and paid are outlined in City of York, Fostering Fees and Payments booklet.</p>

1.3	Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests?
	<p>The key stakeholders are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in Care and their Families. • Foster Carers • The council and elected members <p>Secondary stake holders include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities • Education (schools, colleges, and universities) • Health services <p>As Corporate Parents, it is in all our interests to ensure that children and young people who need to be looked after in a foster care arrangement are close to their families, school, friends and wider connected network.</p>
1.4	What results/outcomes do we want to achieve and for whom? This section should explain what outcomes you want to achieve for service users, staff and/or the wider community. Demonstrate how the proposal links to the Council Plan (2019- 2023) and other corporate strategies and plans.
	<p>Our Ambition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of York has a thriving fostering service, which is able to provide a range of appropriate care arrangements for children and young people in care. • We have a strong financial offer that attracts those considering fostering, so we are able to recruit enough carers to meet our sufficiency duties. • Foster carers feel rewarded and valued and commit to fostering for York long term, providing stability to the service. <p>Our Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing our recruitment strategy; comprising of enhanced digital marketing, new website and improved offer will increase the number of in-house foster carers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing our need to commission external foster care provision and therefore reducing our spend on privately commissioned care arrangements. <p>How will we know this is making a difference?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More children and young people are living in City of York fostering care arrangements which are close to their families, friends, school, and connected networks. We have more foster carers that enable us to better match children's needs, with the skills and expertise of suitable foster carers. Children and young people will experience a stable home life, where they are succeeding in education and receive consistent support with their health.
--	--

Step 2 – Gathering the information and feedback

2.1	What sources of data, evidence and consultation feedback do we have to help us understand the impact of the proposal on equality rights and human rights? Please consider a range of sources, including: consultation exercises, surveys, feedback from staff, stakeholders, participants, research reports, the views of equality groups, as well your own experience of working in this area etc.	
	Source of data/supporting evidence	Reason for using
	Children and Young People	We have worked with care experienced children and young people in designing this skills and fee matrix and continue to work together on developing our overall fostering offer.
	Foster Carers	Foster carers have participated in and contributed to the development of this proposal, recognising the need for the fee structure to be revised to ensure fairness, equity, and competitiveness in attracting new carers.
	Fostering Social Work Staff	Fostering social work staff have participated in and contributed to the development of this proposal. Those workers involved in the recruitment and assessment of new carers recognise the need to improve and strengthen our overall fostering offer.

Example of other local authorities	We have benchmarked our fees and structure against 12 other local and neighbouring authorities. We paid the second lowest entry level fee; our highest fee was competitive with other authorities. However, other local authorities had a much fairer progression / overall fee structure.
Ofsted	National data shows that the number of children entering care is increasing, whilst the number of available foster carers being approved is reducing. There is considered to be a national crisis in relation to the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

Step 3 – Gaps in data and knowledge

3.1	What are the main gaps in information and understanding of the impact of your proposal? Please indicate how any gaps will be dealt with.		
Gaps in data or knowledge		Action to deal with this	
No known gaps in data or knowledge.		n/a	

Step 4 – Analysing the impacts or effects.

4.1	Please consider what the evidence tells you about the likely impact (positive or negative) on people sharing a protected characteristic, i.e. how significant could the impacts be if we did not make any adjustments? Remember the duty is also positive – so please identify where the proposal offers opportunities to promote equality and/or foster good relations.		
Equality Groups and Human Rights.	Key Findings/Impacts	Positive (+) Negative (-) Neutral (0)	High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Age	The purpose of the proposal is to improve stability and secure good outcomes for children and young people in	+	H

	care. The successful delivery of the proposal should directly deliver positive outcomes across all ages and to both foster carers and children and young people.		
Disability	The proposal is inclusive of all children in care and foster carers, including those who are disabled. The positive impact of the proposal will include this group of people.	+	M
Gender	The proposal does not exclude different genders or reinforce gender biases and will have a positive impact across all genders.	+	M
Gender Reassignment	The proposal is inclusive of all children in care and foster carers, including those who identify as non-binary, or a gender other than the one assigned at birth. Delivered well the proposal will have a positive impact.	+	M
Marriage and civil partnership	The proposal is not expected to impact on this characteristic.	0	
Pregnancy and maternity	The proposal is not expected to impact on this characteristic.	0	
Race	The proposal is inclusive of all children in care and foster carers, regardless of race. Delivered well the proposal will have a positive impact, especially on those already at risk of multiple forms of discrimination.	+	M
Religion and belief	The proposal is not expected to impact on this characteristic.	0	
Sexual orientation	The proposal is inclusive of all children in care and foster carers of all sexual orientations. The positive impact of the proposal will include this group.	+	M
Other Socio-economic groups including :	Could other socio-economic groups be affected e.g. carers, ex-offenders, low incomes?		

Carer	This proposal could strengthen support for children in care and those people that care for them.	+	M
Low income groups	This proposal should help towards providing stable homes and stability in education, improving life chances.	+	M
Veterans, Armed Forces Community	The proposal is not expected to impact on this characteristic.	0	
Other			
Impact on human rights:			
List any human rights impacted.	<p>The proposal directly impacts several children's rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Education (Article 28) • Right to Non-Discrimination (Article 2) • Right to Life, Survival, and Development (Article 6) • Right to Be Heard (Article 12) • Right to Play, Leisure, and Cultural Activities (Article 31) • Right to Health (Article 24) • Right to Protection from Violence (Article 19) • Right to an Adequate Standard of Living (Article 27) • Right to Privacy (Article 16) • Right to Special Protection and Assistance (Article 20) • Right to Access Information (Article 17) • Right to Freedom of Expression (Article 13) • Right to Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly (Article 15) 	+	H

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Education on Human Rights and Peace (Article 29) 		
--	---	--	--

Use the following guidance to inform your responses:

Indicate:

- Where you think that the proposal could have a POSITIVE impact on any of the equality groups like promoting equality and equal opportunities or improving relations within equality groups
- Where you think that the proposal could have a NEGATIVE impact on any of the equality groups, i.e. it could disadvantage them
- Where you think that this proposal has a NEUTRAL effect on any of the equality groups listed below i.e. it has no effect currently on equality groups.

It is important to remember that a proposal may be highly relevant to one aspect of equality and not relevant to another.

<p>High impact (The proposal or process is very equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is significant potential for or evidence of adverse impact The proposal is institution wide or public facing The proposal has consequences for or affects significant numbers of people The proposal has the potential to make a significant contribution to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights.</p>
<p>Medium impact (The proposal or process is somewhat equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is some evidence to suggest potential for or evidence of adverse impact The proposal is institution wide or across services, but mainly internal The proposal has consequences for or affects some people The proposal has the potential to make a contribution to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights</p>
<p>Low impact (The proposal or process might be equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is little evidence to suggest that the proposal could result in adverse impact The proposal operates in a limited way The proposal has consequences for or affects few people The proposal may have the potential to contribute to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights</p>

Step 5 - Mitigating adverse impacts and maximising positive impacts

5.1	Based on your findings, explain ways you plan to mitigate any unlawful prohibited conduct or unwanted adverse impact. Where positive impacts have been identified, what is been done to optimise opportunities to advance equality or foster good relations?
	The assessment has found that there should be an overall positive impact from the implementation of the proposal. The proposal seeks to improve the overall financial support to foster carers, which will enhance our ability to recruit more skilled carers to look after our children and young people in York. This will help us to meet our sufficiency duties by providing a range of care arrangements. The proposal will equally have a direct positive impact on the lives of children and young people in care. Offering more choice to enable better matching, improved stability and children and young people being able to live closer to their families, friends and connected networks.

Step 6 – Recommendations and conclusions of the assessment

6.1	Having considered the potential or actual impacts you should be in a position to make an informed judgement on what should be done. In all cases, document your reasoning that justifies your decision. There are four main options you can take:
	- No major change to the proposal – the EIA demonstrates the proposal is robust. There is no potential for unlawful discrimination or adverse impact and you have taken all opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations, subject to continuing monitor and review.

- **Adjust the proposal** – the EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. This involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance quality or to foster good relations.
- **Continue with the proposal** (despite the potential for adverse impact) – you should clearly set out the justifications for doing this and how you believe the decision is compatible with our obligations under the duty.
- **Stop and remove the proposal** – if there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, you should consider stopping the proposal altogether. If a proposal leads to unlawful discrimination it should be removed or changed.

Important: If there are any adverse impacts you cannot mitigate, please provide a compelling reason in the justification column.

Option selected	Conclusions/justification
No major change to the proposal	The proposal has been developed in consultation with foster carers and fostering staff, whilst using previous consultation data provided by children and young people in care. This proposal will improve our overall offer to foster carers as well as strengthening our marketplace in recruiting new carers and competing with other local authorities and private providers.

Step 7 – Summary of agreed actions resulting from the assessment

7.1	What action, by whom, will be undertaken as a result of the impact assessment.		
Impact/issue	Action to be taken	Person responsible	Timescale

8. 1	How will the impact of your proposal be monitored and improved upon going forward? Consider how will you identify the impact of activities on protected characteristics and other marginalised groups going forward? How will any learning and enhancements be capitalised on and embedded?
	<p>The implementation of this proposal will be monitored through the existing KPI tracker, Corporate Parenting Board and DMT through the quarterly fostering report.</p> <p>We will continue to track and challenge the impact of this change and report progress through its annual Corporate Parenting Board report.</p>

Step 8 - Monitor, review and improve



Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	11 March 2025
Report of:	Director of Housing and Communities
Portfolio of:	Councillor Michael Pavlovic, Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities Councillor Jenny Kent, Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency

Housing Retrofit Update

Subject of Report

1. Around a third of the city's carbon emissions are produced through our homes. Reducing this energy consumption alongside the transition to low carbon heating systems is vital in enabling York to transition into a carbon neutral city.
2. Alongside the climate challenge, our residents have experienced a significant cost of living crisis which has hit lowest income families the hardest. This has resulted in less people being able to afford to adequately heat their home, which is known to have a significantly negative impact on both our mental and physical health. In order to help tackle this issue the council has been leading on a number of energy efficiency retrofit projects.
3. This report seeks decisions to deliver further retrofit works in the private and social housing sector as well as supporting future retrofit activity through advice and support.
4. In addition, an update on progress for council led residential retrofit activity is included, covering works to both improve both council housing stock and homes in the private sector. This work is motivated around three key objectives, to reduce the city's impact on climate change, to reduce fuel poverty, and to improve health outcomes for residents.

5. In 2024, central government grant funding opportunities were made available through the Warm Homes programme. The City of York Council submitted high ambition applications in order to accelerate retrofit delivery in the city. Under the Warm Homes: Local Grant (WHLG) programme the council applied for up to £7.38m of funding to deliver retrofits for low-income households in the private sector. Alongside this, the council submitted a grant application for up to £1.9m of retrofit grant (with £1.5m match funding requirement) under the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 (SHF3) fund.
6. The government have confirmed that the total amount of the grant funding applications received nationally is significantly in excess of the level of funding available. In respect of the WHLG programme, applications exceed the available grant funding by more than 3.5 times. Therefore, it is likely that some authorities will receive no grant and many authorities will receive a grant offer significantly below their grant application level. The City of York Council has a strong track record in delivering retrofit works. This gives confidence that the council will receive a grant offer. The expectation is that City of York Council will find out the outcome of the bids in March. Due to the conditions of the grant funding, any offer made will need to be formally accepted through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding before the end of March. This report therefore seeks the required delegated authorities to accept any grant funding offers which the council receives alongside delegated authorities to procure partners to enable the retrofit works to be delivered.

Benefits and Challenges

7. The key benefits of making the decisions outlined in the report are:
 - a) Noting the progress achieved so far in retrofit works and energy efficiency schemes undertaken by the council, both completed and ongoing projects, in working towards the council's ambition to be a net zero carbon city by 2030.
 - b) Noting the proposed future options and proposals to assist the able to pay market to undertake retrofit works and energy efficiency measures within the private sector.
 - c) Enabling the council to deliver the Warm Homes: Local Grant project between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2028, to enable properties to receive energy efficiency and retrofit measures, with measures being aimed at properties with an energy

performance certificate (EPC) rating of D, E, F or G, and where households reside with Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Income Deciles (ID) 1-2 areas, or the housing can demonstrate receipts of a specified means tested benefit, or the household income is £36,000 a year or less.

- d) Enabling the council to deliver the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 project to carry out energy efficiency upgrade in council homes, subject to a positive grant funding outcome. With measure being aimed at improving insulation and heating systems for warmer homes and to help tenants reduce energy bills. Measures proposed include the provision of low carbon, renewable based communal heating systems in place of existing expensive and higher carbon storage heater and immersion hot water systems. The communal areas of the schemes would also benefit from the upgrade.

Policy Basis for Decision

- 8. All the updates and proposals, align with several of the council's Core Commitments, including:
 - **Affordability** – retrofit works including improved thermal performance and more efficient heating systems reduce costs for low income households.
 - **Climate** – the works proposed in this paper will reduce carbon emissions through better insulated homes and low or zero carbon heating systems.
 - **Health** – improving the health of residents of York through improvement to thermal efficiency to help people stay warm in their homes.

In addition, they will also support the Council Plan priorities and the council's ambition to be a net zero carbon city by 2030.

- a) **Health and wellbeing: A health generating city, for children and adults.**

Exposure of residents to excess cold exacerbates a range of health conditions and contributes to increased hospital admissions during the winter months. Older and disabled residents are particularly at risk from excess cold. Retrofitting homes will make tangible improvements to the energy

performance of dwellings thereby reducing incidents of excess cold and associated ill health. Excess cold and unaffordable utility bills are also factors which can contribute to mental ill-health. Therefore, these projects can provide a positive base for improved mental health for residents.

b) Education and skills: High quality skills and learning for all

Retrofit of existing homes requires a skilled workforce and is labour intensive by the nature of the work involved. People working in the construction industry are typically paid above the national average. Utilising central government grant funding to deliver works creates opportunities for the supply chain to engage in training and skills development.

c) Economy and good employment: A fair, thriving, green economy for all.

The projects will invest millions of pounds into the local green economy.

d) Sustainability: Cutting carbon, enhancing the environment for our future.

Carbon emissions from the residential sector accounts for a third of all carbon emissions in York. Retrofit improves the thermal performance of existing dwellings, reduces heating demand, transitions homes to low carbon solutions, and thus reduces reliance on fossil fuels.

Financial Strategy Implications

9. At the time of writing this report, it is not known what level of grant funding the council will receive. The WHLG programme funding is designed to cover 100% of the costs of the works. Therefore, the council is not required to make any financial contribution. The grant covers the costs of retrofit works in homes but also related design and internal staffing costs to run the programme. The government have confirmed that all offers made will be of sufficient scale to enable the employment of staff to support the works.
10. The SHF3 programme requires match funding. Should the council receive the entirety of the grant application of £1.9m, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is required to match fund this with £1.5m. The programme will run for three years and £500k per year has been notionally set aside in the capital programme budget to enable the delivery of this work. A grant offer of less than £1.9m would

require less match funding from the HRA. However, in this scenario, any amount not required for match funding would be utilised to deliver standalone retrofit works in council homes.

Recommendation and Reasons

11. Recommendations

Executive are asked to:

- a) Delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Director of Finance, and Director of Governance, to accept funding offered by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero for the Warm Homes: Local Grant programme and to sign the memorandum of understanding to enable delivery of the works.
- b) Delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Director of Finance, and the Director of Governance, to procure a partner to deliver the Warm Home: Local Grant programme, including entering into the delivery contract with the successfully procured new partner for April 2025 to March 2028 or March 2030 if funding is provided beyond 31 March 2028.
- c) Delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Director of Finance, and the Director of Governance, to accept funding offered by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero for the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund programme and to sign the memorandum of understanding to enable delivery of the works.
- d) Delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Director of Finance, and the Director of Governance, to procure a partner to deliver the Warm Home: Social Housing Fund project, including entering into the delivery contract with the successfully procured new partner for April 2025 to March 2028.

Reason: To deliver the council's ambitions for minimising the energy bills of those residents facing financial challenges, supporting health and wellbeing, building the local green economy, and retrofit supply chains, and reducing carbon emissions in the

city and to ensure the provisions of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 are complied with.

Background

12. In 2019, City of York declared a climate emergency and set an ambition for York to be carbon neutral by 2030. Whilst the council is taking a leading role in achieving this ambition, the council itself is directly responsible for less than 4% of the total emissions in York, and so enabling others in the city to act is essential if we are to achieve this net zero carbon ambition for the city by 2030.
13. This vision is something which is shared with residents of York, with 80% of respondents agreeing with York's net zero carbon city ambition by 2030, and with 70% of residents having already taken action to reduce their carbon footprint. With these results coming from the Big Conversation discussion in the city.
14. To achieve this target reductions in carbon from the current emission level of 936 ktCO₂E (kilo tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) per year to zero by 2030 will be needed. This is a significant and challenging task, particularly as buildings account for 61.9% of emissions (York Climate Change Strategy 2022-2032).
15. Domestic buildings account for 31.8% of the total emissions in York, or approximately 297.6 ktCO₂E per year, and so are a significant source of carbon in the city. This is further supported by the York Climate Change Strategy which identified that emissions from domestic buildings (homes) would need to reduce by 56% by 2030, with this to be achieved through:
 - **Improving energy efficiency in existing buildings**
Insulating and investing in fabric improvements to reduce energy demand.
 - **Reducing emissions from new buildings**
Design and build new developments that minimise energy use and emissions.
 - **Moving away from gas heating systems**
Increase the uptake of renewable heating systems and improve the efficiency of remaining gas boilers.
 - **Switching to energy efficient appliances and green energy tariffs**

Upgrade appliances at home and work to use less energy and save money; and purchase energy from renewable sources.

- **Making our buildings climate resilient**

Protect our built environment from potential flooding and overheating.

16. Improving energy efficiency in existing buildings, through insulation and investing in fabric improvements to reduce energy demands, as well as increasing the uptake of renewable heating systems, represents a significant challenge. But one which must be met to deliver the overall net zero ambition.
17. 2021 census data shows there are 85,458 households in York, of which 65.9% (56,354 homes) were owner occupied, 20.1 % (17,180) were privately rented, and 14% (11,924 homes) were socially rented (11,924) including council homes (ONS 2021 Census (TS054)).
18. Of these homes, approximately 45% of homes are believed to have an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of A to C in York (August 2024), meaning that 55% of homes have an EPC of D or below and being the most energy inefficient properties.
19. This means that in York around 47,000 homes are classed as EPC D or below, with around 31,000 of these being owner occupied and 10,000 being privately rented.
https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2021/report?compare=E06000014#section_7 Of these 41,000 it is estimated that only 5,000 households are eligible for grant funded measures under the current funding criteria.
20. A Retrofit Action Plan was approved by the council's Executive in December 2022, setting out plans for decarbonising homes in York and tackling fuel poverty across all tenures. This Plan builds on the Climate Change Strategy, identifying clear actions required in the residential sector to meet these aspirations. Amongst the key priorities identified are to "Maximise delivery of future government programmes" in the private sector to tackle fuel poverty and accelerating the expansion of retrofit skills in the sector.
21. The Retrofit Action Plan identifies the need to increase skills and capacity as a key requirement of meeting the council's decarbonisation aims. Specific commitments include:

- Ongoing skills programme for our in-house Building Services team to increase our own capacity to deliver works; and
 - Extending existing links with local colleges in addition to other training providers to develop a retrofit skills pathway
22. The council has been highly successful to-date in attracting grant funding to accelerate retrofit works across private rented, homeowner and social housing tenures. This work has directly supported residents in fuel poverty by significantly improving the energy performance of their home, through schemes such as LAD1B, LAD2, LAD3, HUG1, HUG2, and WHLG.
23. Collectively these programmes are anticipated to deliver energy efficiency improvement and carbon reduction measures to around 772 homes within the city, these schemes are principally aimed at those on means tested benefit, low income, or people who reside within Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Income Deciles (ID) 1-2 areas.

Progress in delivering Retrofit works

24. Central government funded retrofit works are required to be undertaken utilising an exacting PAS2035 design and assurance standard. These works are delivered by a relatively immature retrofit market at a time of significant cost inflation. Alongside the supply chain skills shortage, the council has needed to develop expertise in this field to support the delivery of these works. This has created significant challenges in delivering retrofit works at scale within the very short timescales which are associated with existing government grant funding programmes. Despite these challenges the council has made significant progress in delivering retrofit works to date.

A) COMPLETED PRIVATE SECTOR PROPERTY RETROFIT PROJECTS

25. In the private sector, retrofit works have previously been delivered utilising grant funding secured through Local Authority Delivery Phase 1B (LAD1B), Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 (LAD2), Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 (LAD3), and Home Upgrade Grant 1 (HUG1) schemes.
26. Under these schemes the council has improved 211 homes in York with 241 measures, as shown in the table below.

York Private Sector Housing Retrofit Measures Completed	Number
Air Source Heat Pumps	2
Cavity Wall Insulation	14
External Wall Insulation	7
Hybrid Air Source Heat Pumps	10
Loft insulation	66
Room in Roof Insulation	15
Smart Heating Controls	10
Solar Photo Voltaic Panels	116
Underfloor Insulation	1
Total	241

B) COMPLETED COUNCIL PROPERTY RETROFIT PROJECTS

27. In respect of works completed to council homes, the council has delivered energy efficiency and retrofit measures through grant funding from the Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 scheme (LAD2) and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 (SHDF1) grant, with City of York Council contributing towards the costs of the schemes via money allocated from the Housing Revenue Account.
28. Under these schemes the council has improved 73 council owned homes with 141 measures, as shown in the table below.

York Council Housing Retrofit Measures Completed	Number
Cavity Wall Insulation	17
Doors	10
External Wall Insulation	1
Flat Roof Insulation	4
Hybrid Air Source Heat Pumps	17
Loft insulation	2
Smart Heating Controls	9
Solar Photo Voltaic Panels	71
Windows	10
Total	141

C) CURRENT PRIVATE SECTOR PROPERTY RETROFIT PROJECT UPDATES

i) Local Energy Advice Demonstrator (LEAD) Project

29. The LEAD project is a Northeast and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub funded scheme which will end on 31 March 2025.
30. The LEAD project was awarded £500k of grant funding and commenced in November 2023, with the aim to provide home energy-efficiency and carbon literacy advice to 475 residents in York, before the end of March 2025.
31. Advice is provided to help residents understand the requirements of their properties and empower them to approach installers, particularly in homes/buildings which are 'hard to treat'.
32. During the project the council has worked in partnership with organisations including the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, the York Conservation Trust, the York Travellers Trust, and Leeds Beckett University, who have delivered retrofit assessment in properties in York.
33. Home energy retrofit and safe space training has been provided, including hosting three sessions at the council owned Gypsy and Traveller sites to encourage engagement in energy retrofit, and to undertake a workshop at providing energy retrofit advice to the housed Gypsy and Traveller community. The York Travellers Trust have also received energy advice to enable further engagement with the communities.
34. To date, 452 home energy efficiency advice 'interventions' have taken place. The table below outlines current strong performance in the delivery of advice against the project's KPI's.

LEAD KPI Performance to date		Number to date	Target
KPI 1	Number of people provided with in-person advice	452	475
KPI 2	Number of households with retrofit measures installed following advice	7	35
KPI 3	Customer satisfaction score with advice	100%	85%

Additional KPI 1	Harder-to-treat homes identified locally, and barriers to retrofit identified and overcome resulting in projects that can be taken forward with confidence of high-quality installation to a supplier	184	195
Additional KPI 2	Vulnerable consumers identified locally, and barriers to retrofit identified and overcome resulting in projects that can be taken forward with confidence of high-quality installation to a supplier	82	75
Additional KPI 3	Homes at EPC D and below provided with an informed options appraisal to decarbonise and/or achieve a minimum EPC C	184	195
Additional KPI 4	Homes with fossil fuel heat sources provided with design options to substantially decarbonise heating	19	60
Additional KPI 5	Customer reporting that they understand the steps to reduce energy use in their home and are intending to carry out upgrade measures	83%	70%

ii) **Retrofit One Stop Shop York (ROSSY) Project**

35. The Retrofit One Stop Shop (ROSSY) project is funded by Innovate UK. Funding comes to an end in November 2025.
36. ROSSY is a council led project supported by 7 partners, these are: BrightSparks Agency, University of York, York Community Energy, Energy Systems Catapult, Wrapt Homes, York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, and Abundance Finance.
37. The partnership has been created with the aim of resourcing and creating an end-to-end, home energy-efficiency retrofit online platform that will take York residents through the entire retrofit journey from initial enquiry through to the delivery of works.
38. The partnership works together to ensure maximum resident engagement, thorough monitoring and evaluation, and the use of innovative technologies to promote the benefits of retrofit. The

scheme also seeks to create Community Champions, provide training to installers, create a robust and accredited supplier marketplace, and create new finance opportunities, external to those via central government funding.

39. Progress to date has seen the launch of the digital platform Yor Energy (www.yorenergy.co.uk) in October 2024. In addition to the platform, two CYC properties will be upgraded through a deep retrofit as 'Demonstrator Homes' for potential customers to visit or view before being re-used as council homes with significantly reduced fuel bills and improved thermal performance for future residents.

iii) **Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2) Project**

40. The HUG2 project, funded by the Department of Energy Security Net Zero, will end on 31 March 2025.
41. HUG2 is a £1,242k grant funded scheme to deliver retrofit and energy efficiency measures to 60 properties in York, through the provision of fabric measures and heating upgrades to off-gas rural properties, apartments with all electric heating, and properties with old non-gas heating (e.g. storage heaters).
42. HUG2 is aimed at off gas properties with an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of D, E, F or G, and where the household income is £36,000 a year or less and is currently being delivered in partnership with Clear Climate Ltd, following a successful procurement process.
43. The table below demonstrates progress against the KPI's for the project. It is anticipated that the target of 60 home upgrades will be achieved before the funding deadline.

HUG2 Performance to date	Number	Target
Sign ups	106	80
Retrofit assessments	78	80
Properties submitted to batch approval	62	70
Installs in progress	27	60

Installs completed	13	60
Installs signed off	4	60

44. For the 44 completed or in progress installations, the following measures have been, or are being, installed:

45.

HUG2 Housing Retrofit Measures Completed	Number
Loft Insulation	26
Cavity Wall Insulation	7
External Wall Insulation	2
Internal Wall Insulation	16
Room in Roof Insulation	9
Underfloor Insulation	2
Air Source Heat Pumps	30
Digital/Smart Controls	31
Solar PV	21
Double or Secondary Glazing	3
External Doors	2
High Heat Retention Storage Heaters (for Flats)	10
High Heat Retention Storage Heaters (for Houses)	14
Total	173

iv) Retrofit Skills Project

46. Recent estimates suggest that to retrofit all of York and North Yorkshire's domestic properties by 2030, the region would require 15,000 more tradespeople in the supply chain.

47. To start addressing the projected imbalance between supply and demand, £128k of Shared Prosperity Funding is being utilised to undertake a project with York College to upskill or retrain 60 York residents or businesses, enabling them to expand their retrofit delivery opportunities.

48. The courses being offered include:

- Level 3 Solar PV Installation and Maintenance
- Level 3 Air Source Heat Pump Installation and Maintenance
- Level 3 Electric Vehicle Installation and Maintenance

- Level 3 Introduction to Retrofit
- Level 3 Domestic Energy Assessor and Retrofit Assessor
- Level 5 Retrofit Coordinator

49. All 60 places have been filled and trainees are set to complete their training by 31st March 2025.

v) ECO4 & GBIS Project

50. At the decision session for the Executive Member of Housing, Planning and Safer Communities, in July 2024, a recommendation was approved to create a partnership with Agility Eco to deliver the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) in York, and allow the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and Data Sharing Agreement between the council and Agility ECO. This enables York residents to more easily benefit from these programmes.

51. ECO4 and GBIS are government energy efficiency schemes run by Ofgem, which are intended to run from April 2022 to March 2026.

52. The main aim of these schemes is to support low income and vulnerable households to

- install energy saving measures
- improve the efficiency of the lowest rated homes

53. Since July 2024 negotiations on the provisions of the contract with Agility Eco have been concluded and a Memorandum of Understanding and Data Sharing Agreement have been signed following consultation with the Director of Governance (and their delegated officers).

vi) Public Health 'Warm and Well' Service

54. It is a common occurrence, during the winter particularly, that residents are admitted to hospital due to health conditions that have been exacerbated by cold and damp in their homes.

55. In response, the ICB and Public Health service have provided £68k to carry out retrofit assessments, provide draughtproofing and ventilation measures, and give energy efficiency and retrofit advice to 50 York residents that are at risk of ill-health due to their current living conditions.

56. The delivery period of the scheme commenced on 1st January 2025 and run until 20th June 2025.
57. Marketing of the scheme is ongoing and a target of 15-20 customer installs by the end of March 2025 has been set. It is anticipated that the target of 50 will be achieved by June.

D) CURRENT COUNCIL PROPERTY RETROFIT PROJECTS
i) Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2 (SHDF2)

58. This programme follows the successful application of grant funding for £1,033k from BEIS, with match funding from the HRA of £1,104k to deliver measures to 135 council homes. These works consist of:
- A whole property renovation project including External Wall Insulation and heat pumps alongside the installation of 40 replacement 'pods' at Bell Farm
 - External Wall Insulation works to the solid wall ginnel section of 90 mid-terrace houses
 - External Wall Insulation works for 5 solid wall flats as part of a pilot to inform future work programmes
59. There have been multiple challenges in the delivery of these schemes, however an agreed plan is in place to complete delivery within the grant timescales. The challenges largely relate to the complexity of works with a supply chain that is. Works are underway for 119 of the properties, with completions expected from March 2025.

ii) Net Zero Fund grant for Alex Lyon House and Honeysuckle House renewable heating upgrades

60. As part of the HRA Asset Management Plan and the Retrofit Action Plan, it is identified that electric storage heaters and immersion hot water tanks result in high costs for residents and it is an aim to phase these out through component upgrades over time.
61. Replacement of these systems is complex, particularly when carried out at larger apartment schemes such as Alex Lyon House and Honeysuckle House. The 62 flats plus communal areas constitute a significant proportion of the total storage heater systems currently installed across the council's flats.
62. £1,895k of grant funding has been secured for the schemes, through the York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority Net Zero

Fund.

63. Funded works include Solar Photovoltaic panels as part of the renewable heat pump heating system with an associated energy storage element. This comprehensive energy upgrade is planned to bring significant cost reductions for residents, predicted at 50% alongside achieving a high level of thermal comfort throughout the winter.
64. The Net Zero Fund represents a significant opportunity to improve the council's homes for residents who face financial challenges and to increase investment in the city and council housing stock. These works are expected to be complete by June 2025.

E) FUTURE PRIVATE SECTOR PROPERTY RETROFIT PROJECTS

i) Warm Homes Local Grant (WHLG) Project

65. The Warm Homes: Local Grant is a government-funded programme, delivered by Local Authorities, to improve energy efficiency for low-income households in the private sector. Grants are provided for energy performance upgrades and low carbon heating.
66. WHLG is aimed at providing financial support for households which reside within Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Income Deciles (ID) 1-2 areas, or households which can demonstrate receipt of a specified means tested benefit, or households with an annual gross income below £36,000.
67. The grant is aimed at owner occupier and private tenanted sector households with an EPC rating within bands D to G. Landlords are required to make a 50% cost contribution for any additional homes upgraded after the first. However, tenants are not required to make any contribution.
68. Capital grant funding of up to £30k per home will be available to households, with £15k per home available for energy performance upgrades and £15k per home for low carbon heating.
69. All upgrades must adhere to the latest PAS 2035:2023 guidance, and installers must be Trustmark registered and PAS 2030:2023 certified for energy performance measures and/or MCS certified for low carbon heating measures.

70. An application for funding of £6.27m for capital works and £1.1m for administration and ancillary costs was submitted. However, the government have confirmed that the programme is oversubscribed by more than 3.5 times of the available funding. Given the City of York Council's positive track record of delivery, it is hoped that a grant offer will be forthcoming in March. Funding will run from April 2025 to March 2028.
71. To provide an indication of the level of potential delivery, should the council receive a grant offer of around £1m, this would enable the installation of energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures in around 70 homes in York. This is based on an indicative average cost of around £12.5k per property. £2m would deliver 140 retrofits, £3m around 210 retrofits, and so on.
72. Subject to a successful grant offer and to enable a prompt start to delivery of the WHLG project in April 2025, an extension to an existing procured contract with delivery partner Clear Climate Ltd is proposed for a period of one year. This would enable the year one works to be delivered whilst a plan for years 2 and 3 delivery is finalised.
73. This report seeks delegated authority to enter into a MOU to accept any grant offer received and to procure delivery partners.

F) FUTURE COUNCIL PROPERTY RETROFIT PROJECTS

i) Warm Homes Social Housing Fund Wave 3 (SHF3)

74. A bid for £1.85m grant funding from the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 energy efficiency programme was submitted to the Department of Energy Security Net Zero (DESNZ) to upgrade approximately 192 council properties over the next 3 years (April 2025 to March 2028) in a £3.35m programme.
75. A £1.5m of HRA co-funding contribution has been identified to support this programme, which includes project management staffing in addition to full Assessment, Retrofit Coordination, Design and Works in accordance with the PAS 2030 and PAS 2035 standards.
76. The proposal is designed to meet the priorities of the council's Retrofit Action Plan, improving the thermal insulation of HRA homes that are partially or entirely lacking wall insulation. The government

have confirmed that the level of grant application received is significantly in excess of the level of funding available, therefore many authorities will receive no or only a partial grant offer. Given the council's positive track record of retrofit delivery, it is hoped that a grant offer will be received, albeit this may be below the application submitted due to high demand nationally.

77. The table below summarises the planned retrofit delivery should a grant offer be received that meets the application in its entirety. Should a partial offer be received then this programme of works would be scaled down. However, the council's notional retrofit investment funding of £1.5m could continue to be utilised, with some utilised as match funding under SHF3 and some for standalone non-grant funded retrofit works. This report seeks delegated authority to enter into a MOU to accept any grant offer received and to procure delivery partners.

Type	Estimated properties over 3 years and works
Mid terrace properties with solid "ginnel" wall	60 Partial External Wall Insulation (EWI)
Ground floor solid wall flats as part of mixed construction block	67 Full EWI
1960s mixed construction type including bungalows, houses and flats	25 Partial EWI, potentially PV for bungalows where this is best way to achieve EPC C
Non-traditional types pilot	5 Full EWI
Other property types with predominantly insulated thermal envelope at EPC D, for heat pump installation	35 Heat pump pilot with performance monitoring and tenant support

G) AWARDS RECEIVED FOR RETROFIT WORK

78. The City of York Council has been recognised regionally and nationally for the work undertaken in relation to Energy Efficiency, Decarbonisation and Retrofit in the City.

79. In June 2024, at the Yorkshire Energy Efficiency Awards 2024, City of York Council received an award for the regional large scale project of the year with this award being received for work undertaken in the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 (SHDF1) project.
80. At the Yorkshire Energy Efficiency Awards 2024, City of York Council were also highly commended in the regional council or local authority body of the year award category.
81. In November 2024, at the Community Energy England Awards 2024, City of York Council received a highly commended awarded in the supportive local authority category for its support of York Community Energy.

Consultation Analysis

82. Consultation has been undertaken with external stakeholders, Council Members and officers at various stages of each project and on key priorities identified within the Retrofit Action Plan. The Retrofit Action Plan was developed in consultation with city partners and Scrutiny. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are well aligned with the approved Retrofit Action Plan.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

83. The options the Executive could consider in respect of this report are below:
 - a) **Option 1** – to accept any grant funding offers received, under the Warm Homes Local Grant and Warm Homes Social Housing Fund schemes, in order to enable the delivery of the retrofit works outlined in this report.
 - b) **Option 2** – to not accept the grant funding offer outlined above, and to therefore not deliver the retrofit works outlined in this report.

Analysis

84. It is recommended that the Executive approves Option 1 and the recommendations outlined in paragraph 11. This provides the most comprehensive response to the ambitions of improving the energy

efficiency of homes in the city, which will maximise the reduction in carbon emissions and maximise the benefits for residents through warmer homes which are more energy efficient and more affordable to heat.

85. Option 2, if taken, would reduce our capacity to deliver retrofit works over the coming 3 years.

Organisational Impact and Implications

86. *Financial*

The WHLG grant is for properties in the private sector, with 20% of funds for each year of the three year programme being awarded as an upfront payment, at the start of each financial year and the remainder of the grant awarded as part of a batch application process.

Administration and ancillary costs can be claimed by CYC and the contractor up to an anticipated maximum combined value of £1.1 million. CYC internal resources costs are to be contained within this value.

The SHF3 grant is for properties in the public sector and is match funded with £1.5m of funds from the Housing Revenue Account Major Repairs Reserve. Administration and ancillary costs up to 15% can be claimed by the council to cover the management costs of these works.

87. *Human Resources*

Any additional resource required to administer or help deliver the WHLG project will be established and resourced in accordance with council policy using existing resources where feasible.

88. *Legal*

This report recommends accepting further government grant funding to continue successful delivery of improved home energy efficiency initiatives. The council will in turn make grant funding available to households and undertake delivery of works through partners procured via compliant routes. Legal services will provide the project team with advice on grant funding terms and any subsidy control

implications.

89. ***Procurement***

The proposed works and services for the HUG2 project have been commissioned via a compliant procurement process under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the council's Contract Procedure Rules. The Commercial Procurement team have been consulted alongside Legal Services throughout the process to ensure the council is achieving value for money whilst delivering the contract.

The Commercial Procurement team are also supporting the Net Zero Fund projects alongside Legal Services to ensure the council is achieving value for money alongside compliance with all necessary procurement requirement whilst delivering the required works.

Should any additional requirements for services or works arise, Procurement must be a tool to deliver those outcomes. Services and/or works must be procured via a compliant process in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (soon to be Procurement Act 2023). Further advice regarding the procurement process and development of procurement strategies must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team.

90. ***Health and Wellbeing***

Climate change is one of the biggest public health issues of our time. NICE estimate that older adults living in 'hard to heat' homes contribute to 28,000 additional deaths each year and is a major contributor to avoidable hospital admissions. This project seeks to put in more affordable and lower carbon heating solutions to housing that is designed for older adults. As well as contributing to achieving the cities 'net zero' pledge, a project like this supports the delivery of the health and wellbeing strategy ambition to be an 'age friendly city'.

Implementing net zero policies would result in substantial reductions in mortality by 2050, according to a modelling study published in [The Lancet Planetary Health](#). However improving living standards also contribute to a reduction in people living with fewer health conditions including mental health issues, depression and anxiety, cardiovascular disease and asthma by reducing exposure to cold air

and pollutants.

91. ***Environment and Climate action***

Domestic retrofit to improve the energy efficiency of homes across York is vital to achieving our climate change ambitions. The proposed approach for the Warm Homes: Local Grant programme and Social Housing Fund programme, will deliver positive outcomes towards these ambitions

92. ***Affordability***

In addition to providing warmer homes with reduced costs for those residents on low incomes this work will provide skilled employment opportunities in the city.

93. ***Equalities and Human Rights***

The council recognises, and needs to take into account its Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it in the exercise of a public authority's functions).

A comprehensive Housing Asset Management and Energy Efficiency Retrofit Plan 2023-2028 EIA was undertaken and submitted as part of the plan taken to Executive on 15 December 2022.

This report highlights the positive impact that such schemes will have on older residents, disabled residents and those facing financial difficulties, both in terms of health and wellbeing and affordability.

94. ***Data Protection and Privacy***

The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal

offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time – reference AD-11814.

However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.

95. ***Communications***

Communications implications will involve announcing the various planned projects and communicating with households which will benefit from having these energy efficiency measures installed in their homes. This includes any current campaigns to promote ongoing projects and will include a new phase of campaigning to take up the projects outlined in the report. Comms can assist with robust communications and engagement planning, as well as being on hand to deal with any reactive enquiries.

96. ***Economy***

The work covered by this report supports delivery of the Economic Strategy and Skills Plan and demonstrates the benefits of aligning UKSPF skills funding on supporting retrofit training. There are significant potential economic benefits for York in accelerating our work on retrofit and preparing our workforce through skills development. The work covered in this report will lead to around 60 people being trained in the necessary new skills.

Risks and Mitigations

97. Retrofit works are complex. They require careful design and implementation in order to ensure home improvements in the long term. Detailed engagement took place at all stages of the development of the Retrofit Action Plan which informs these programmes alongside consideration of emerging good practice and the experience of other authorities.
98. All risks are monitored through project risk registers for each programme of works with governance in place to ensure these risks are continually reviewed and appropriate decisions are made in response.
99. Executive need to be aware that should the council under deliver on the works described in the funding agreements, the council may be

asked to return the proportion of grant income received against the under-delivery. This would mean it could place some pressures on revenue budgets for staffing costs which would have been paid for from the grant funding.

Wards Impacted

100.All

Contact details

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

Author

Name:	Michael Jones
Job Title:	Assistant Director - Housing
Service Area:	Housing
Telephone:	01904 552598
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	02/03/2025

Co-author

Name:	Anthony Dean
Job Title:	Healthy and Sustainable Homes Manager
Service Area:	Housing
Telephone:	01904 551588

Background papers

City of York Council Executive 18 April 2024 Decisions – Housing Retrofit Update

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/g13938/Decisions%20Thursday%2018-Apr-2024%2017.30%20Executive.pdf?T=2&CT=2>

Housing Asset Management and Energy Efficiency Retrofit Plan 2023-2028 Equalities Impact Assessment

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s164358/Annex%20B%20-%20Equalities%20Impact%20Assessment.pdf>

Annexes

None

Abbreviations

BEIS	Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy
DESNZ	Department of Energy Security Net Zero
DPIA	Data Protection Impact Assessment
ECO4	Energy Company Obligation
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
EWI	External Wall Insulation
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GBIS	Great British Insulation Scheme
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
HUG1	Home Upgrade Grant Wave 1
HUG2	Home Upgrade Grant Wave 2
ICB	Integrated Care Board
ID	Income Deciles
ILC	Independent Living Communities
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
ktCO2E	Kilo Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent
LAD1B	Local Authority Delivery Phase 1B
LAD2	Local Authority Delivery Phase 2
LAD3	Local Authority Delivery Phase 3
LEAD	Local Energy Advice Demonstrator
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
ONS	Office National Statistics
PAS	Publicly Available Specification
ROSSY	Retrofit One Stop Shop York
SHDF2	Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2
SHF3	Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3
SLA	Service Level Agreement
Solar PV	Solar Photo Voltaic
UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
WHLG	Warm Homes: Local Grant



Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	11/03/2025
Report of:	Director of Housing & Communities
Portfolio of:	Executive Leader, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

Decision Report: Adoption and implementation of the York Poverty Truth Commission's Charter for Organisational Standards

Subject of Report

1. This report explains the work undertaken by the York Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) and how it led to the creation of the Commission's Charter and Organisational Standards. These aim to promote dignity and respect for those facing poverty.
2. It also provides an update on what has happened since the Charter was launched, and what the next steps are, including monitoring of the implementation of the Standards at the council and across the city.
3. The recommendations in this report will support the council in its vision to establish the conditions that would make the city of York a healthier, fairer, more affordable, more sustainable and more accessible place, where everyone feels valued. This work will also feed into the ongoing work to co-produce a 10 year Anti Poverty with residents and partners across the city.
4. The standards build on the council's existing values and support a more person centred approach and direction of travel across many council services. The standards are also a key part of the York

Neighbourhood Model approved by this Executive on 12 December 2024.

5. The Executive is being asked to formally adopt the Charter and Organisational Standards and approve the next steps to embed the approach across all services of the council, along with the ongoing monitoring arrangements.

Benefits and Challenges

6. The work of the PTC highlighted the difficulties people are experiencing who are in poverty with complex personal circumstances such as those dealing with homelessness, mental health challenges or are disabled. The new standards focus on making services more responsive to people's needs rather than expecting them to navigate complex systems alone. This approach is fundamental to future ways of working such as those outlined in the *York Neighbourhood Model* alongside the development of *Health's Integrated Neighbourhood Teams* and the *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy*. Many of the ways of working are integral to the development of the Family, Frailty and Mental Health Hubs across the city.
7. As with any cultural change programme the challenge will be embedding the standards without identifying further organisational resources especially where corporate training or process improvement is required. This will be considered as part of the council's transformation plans, including an 'Improving Resident Experience' review.

Policy Basis for Decision

8. The report responds to the *How the council operates* Council Plan 2023-2027 priority "Improving customer experience will drive everything we do". The PTC standards will directly benefit all residents accessing council services.
9. In terms of the council's core commitments:
 - *Equalities and Human Rights* - services will be more accessible as a result of learning from those most affected by poverty.

- *Affordability* - Tackling the cost-of-living crisis - through implementing the Charter and Standards the council will find new ways so everyone who lives here benefits from the success of the city, targeting our support at those who need it most, supporting communities to build on their own strengths and those of the people around them.
- *Health and wellbeing* - the recommendations in this report are core to effective health early intervention and prevention activities in order to reduce health inequalities for those experiencing poverty.

Financial Strategy Implications

10. The proposals in this report in the main will be taken forward as underpinning standards as part of a forthcoming Customer Experience Review. Any activities to embed the standards into ways of working will need to be absorbed within existing budgets.

Recommendations and Reasons

11. The council's Executive is asked to:
 - Note the work of the York Poverty Truth Commission and the council to date in promoting and implementing the Organisational Standards;
 - Formally adopt the Charter for Organisational Standards developed by the York Poverty Truth Commission; and
 - Approve a published six-monthly monitoring report for the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion.

Reason: to commit to and promote the work of the PTC and secure ongoing delivery and monitoring of the work into the future.

Background

Establishment of the Commission

12. A Poverty Truth Commission begins by putting those with direct experience of poverty first and asking them to share their knowledge about what is truly needed to make change. They set the agenda. It acts as a vital link between those with experience (Community Commissioners) and decision makers in the area (Civic Commissioners), building trusted relationships. It also removes labels such as 'service user' and 'professional' and humanises the system which is currently in place to tackle poverty. All people within the PTC should be heard, and everyone's opinions are valued.
13. Funded by key organisations in the city alongside the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the York Poverty Truth Commission officially launched on 9 March 2023. Prior to this the Community Commissioners had been meeting for some time to build trust and confidence ahead of selecting the Civic Commissioners they wanted to work with. The Civic Commissioners were chosen from local organisations such as City of York Council, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York CVS, Primary Care, Mental Health Trust and North Yorkshire Police.

Development of the Charter and Organisational Standards

14. Over a year Community Commissioners shared lived experience of existing culture, systems and processes affecting those in poverty, and focussed on what needed to change. In the end the Commissioners prioritised '*To be treated with kindness, understanding, honesty and respect when accessing services*', as the scope of a set of conditions that would make the most difference to them whilst experiencing poverty.
15. From these discussions the Commissioners produced the following set of four organisational standards that if embedded into practice will make a significant difference to the people of York and beyond:
 - Standard 1 - We listen
 - Standard 2 - We are understanding
 - Standard 3 - We are respectful and friendly
 - Standard 4 – We are responsive, honest and care about getting you the right support

16. The full Organisational Standards including the actions that should be taken to meet them can be found in the Annex to this report and available here:

<https://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PTC-Organisational-Standards-Booklet.pdf>

Launch and Progress to Date

17. ***The ‘Charter for Organisational Standards – TOGETHER promoting dignity and respect for those facing poverty’*** was launched at a *Celebration and Next Steps* event held at The Priory Street centre on 24 April 2024. Civic Commissioners including those from the council publicly pledged to adopt and integrate the Charter into the working practices of their respective organisations and challenged others to do the same.
18. In January 2025 the PTC met to review progress and heard the feedback and progress from Civic Commissioners:
19. **Actions by the council:**
- In July 2024 the work of the PTC was presented in public at the statutory Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - In Housing and Communities - around 500 staff across Customer Services, Communities Teams and Housing (repairs, options, allocations, and housing management officers) have received an overview of the standards and watched the celebration event video.
 - The Director of Public Health (DPH) has devoted one of his all-staff sessions to PTC, including the video of the celebration event and asking all to read the PTC standards and reflect them in their practice. This included around 70 staff who are frontline and customer facing, a large proportion health visitors and school nurses. Additionally, the standards are highlighted and the summary reprinted in the Director’s independent DPH annual report.
 - In Childrens Social Care and Education both their practice model and trauma informed training relate to the standards of the Poverty Truth Commission and the Corporate Director has encouraged services informally to adopt them.

- Trauma informed training has been delivered by the regional Mental Health Trust to the Executive and council management team to inform a plan for roll out across the whole council with pilot training already taking place in some services.
- The introduction of a new policy around managing customer relations will be launched with a trauma informed focus and ensure that the core principles of the PTC are embedded.
- Building on the feedback and examples from Civic Commissioners of council correspondence, the council is working on making letters and communications easier to understand, with a project in collaboration with the University of York.

20. Examples of actions by other organisations:

- Introduction of a Kindness Charter;
- Meeting with teams on a monthly basis and discussion of the standards to remind people that they exist and should be used;
- A range of activities to improve digital inclusion;
- Organisational values and complaints procedures have been updated to reflect the standards.

21. Partnership Digital Inclusion Work:

The Digital Friendly York (DFY) partnership which is facilitated by the council and other partners such as Joseph Rowntree Foundation met with a smaller group of the Civic Commissioners after its main work was completed. They talked about the digital inclusion priorities the partnership should be thinking about - around providing skills, data and access to equipment. The group identified a number of solutions, but the key one was for a local business accreditation or registration scheme to provide safe spaces where people could access digital help, advice and information.

The outcomes from this work include:

- A Civic Commissioner sits on the new digital partnership steering group to give lived experience input and feedback on the experience of people they meet every day.
- Suggestions from Civic Commissioners led to planned actions around:

- A Digital Friendly York Campaign to promote digital confidence and access to support.
- A Digital Friendly York accreditation scheme for organisations offering digital assistance.
- A Digital Friendly York Awards to showcase good practices.

The Civic Commissioners:

22. The Civic Commissioners have continued to meet as a group and are regularly invited to be involved with teams and organisations across the city to give their experiences and inform new thinking and changes across organisations. They continue to be available for this activity and are considering how they can deliver this as a service perhaps as part of a voluntary/community organisation and they are working with York CVS on this as a proposal.

Next Steps and Monitoring

23. Each organisation adopting the Charter will need to track its own progress against the Standards. It is proposed that in order to monitor progress the council will publish a six-monthly update for the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality, and Inclusion.
24. Further activities being planned include:
- Leadership and cross-council briefing sessions;
 - Workshops and learning lunches; and
 - Embedding the standards in the council's transformation programme.
25. Other activity in planning from the Poverty Truth Commission, aside from securing the group's longevity, could include highlighting the Standards at planned events such as the Festival of Ideas, Health Mela and develop a roadshow approach. They wish to engage with the Good Business Charter organisations for them to consider adopting the Standards. They wish to create an ongoing network for people to continue to meet and as previously stated this may be formalised through a VCSE governance structure. Existing funding for the group comes to an end in March 2025

Consultation Analysis

26. The entire report is based on the work of The Poverty Truth Commission and led by the experiences and proposals from Civic Commissioners.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

27. The options in relation to this report are:
- To approve the recommendations at paragraph 11 to maximise the opportunity to adopt the standards and deliver cultural change in line with the Charter commitment already made by CYC;
 - To reject the recommendations, which would be to reject the fundamental foundation of the work to drive decision and policy making from lived experience and to fail to benefit from the expertise and insight derived from this work.

Organisational Impact and Implications

- 28.
- **Financial** - The overall cost of implementing the standards is not known. Therefore, it is assumed that any activities and costs arising from the recommendations in this report will need to be met from existing budgets.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** - Training activities will be developed locally according to the needs of the services and their residents.
 - **Legal**, There are no legal implications of this report.
 - **Procurement** - There are no procurement implications of this report.
 - **Health and Wellbeing** - Early intervention and prevention activities outlined in this report will contribute to reducing health inequalities caused by the wider determinants of health. Residents accessing a range of services including housing and care will all benefit from an improved experience when communicating and engaging with the council helping to improving health and wellbeing outcomes and reducing health inequalities.
 - **Environment and Climate action** - The role of the PTC can support the city's climate change ambitions in relation to

facilitating a just transition towards net zero and addressing issues associated with food and fuel poverty. The York Poverty Truth Commission should be included in future consultation on updates to the climate change Action Plan.

- **Affordability** - the focus of this report is on improving standards when engaging with residents who are in poverty and may have other complex needs, supporting them to access services, support, advice and information positively to improve their outcomes.
- **Equalities and Human Rights** - A full Equalities Impact Assessment is considered unnecessary as the outcomes for all protected groups is overwhelmingly positive. Whilst the charter and standards have been developed by those experiencing poverty – they were also representative of people with many complex experiences and a number were from the disabled community. The standards relate to behaviours that will benefit all residents.
- **Data Protection and Privacy** - there are no implications of the recommendations and options in this report as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.
- **Communications** - Communications supports the recommendations of this report, recognising its links to the core council commitments of EACH, and the city's wider status as a Human Rights City. Communications will support the adoption and implementation of the PTC charter with a robust communications and stakeholder engagement plan, as well as being prepared for any reactive statements that are needed.
- **Economy** - There is significant research that shows a direct link between lower confidence, lower self-esteem and social exclusion that all affect social mobility. By taking a cross-council cultural approach to improving residents interactions with the council is part of the council's commitment to early intervention that may improve their access to financial and employment support, and support broader social mobility.

Risks and Mitigations

29. The main risk is that, without resources, the standards might not be properly implemented resulting in no change and no improvement or worsening of the experience of residents in poverty in the city. To mitigate this the work needs to be embedded in the transformation programme and a detailed process of change undertaken.
30. As outlined in the financial implications section above, the cost of implementing the standards has not been quantified. Therefore, there is also a risk that costs may not be contained within existing budgets, requiring additional savings to be identified from other council services in future.

Wards Impacted

31. This work could affect all wards and residents in York

Contact details

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

Author

Name:	Pauline Stuchfield
Job Title:	Director of Housing & Communities
Service Area:	Housing & Communities
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	18/02/2025

Background papers

Council Plan – Executive 14th September 2023

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=65632>

York Neighbourhood Model/ Homelessness and Rough Sleeper
Strategy 2024-29– Executive 12th December 2024

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=14503&Ver=4>

Health & Wellbeing Board 24th July 2024

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=68444>

Annexes

- Annex A – Extract from The York Poverty Truth Commission - Charter for Organisational Standards

Abbreviations

CVS	Centre for Voluntary Service
CYC	City of York Council
DFY	Digital Friendly York
DPH	Director of Public Health
DPIA	Data Protection Impact Assessment
EACH	The council's core commitments – Equalities & Human Rights, Affordability, Climate & Health
PTC	Poverty Truth Commission
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

This page is intentionally left blank

STANDARD #1

We listen

1. Ensure that feedback systems are varied and accessible
2. Openly and constructively engage with the feedback you receive
3. Explore ways to involve people with experience of poverty in your employee and service reviews
4. Establish feedback as a top three indicator of success
5. Establish ways to proactively involve and listen to people who have experienced poverty as part of your decision making processes, where those decisions are likely to impact people living in poverty
6. Understand a person's situation and respond in a supportive and proportionate way if the person appears stressed, frustrated or anxious
7. Ensure you have processes in place that allow other people to speak on a person's behalf

STANDARD #2

We are understanding

1. Ensure you are not making assumptions about individuals or their situation at the start of your interactions
2. Take time to really listen to a person and understand their unique situation
3. Frequently check you are correctly understanding what you are being told by asking questions (it may help to explain why you are doing this so it doesn't appear as though you are interrogating the person or trying to trip them up)
4. At the end of your interactions, check if people felt understood and whether you have responded to their needs
5. Support everyone in your organisation to attend training or experiences that will help improve their understanding of poverty

STANDARD #3

We are respectful and friendly

Although approaches should be responsive to the personal and cultural preferences of individuals, it is likely that being respectful and friendly would include:

- 1.** Introducing yourself
- 2.** Making eye contact
- 3.** Smiling
- 4.** Using good manners
- 5.** Adopting an appropriate and friendly tone of voice
- 6.** Being conscious of what we say, how we say it, the words we use and the impact that these may have on people
- 7.** Asking if it's ok to make notes while speaking to a person

STANDARD #4

We are responsive, honest and care about getting you the right support

- 1.** Adopt an empowering and engaging approach in your interactions, with an emphasis on helping people to find solutions that are right for them and their circumstances
- 2.** Ensure your teams have the skills and capability to make decisions and resolve the issues people need help with
- 3.** Empower colleagues to use their discretion to give people the support they need and find solutions
- 4.** Recruit, train and support colleagues so that they have both the right skills and the right values
- 5.** Acknowledge when you don't understand or have made a mistake
- 6.** Be open about what you can and can't do. If you can't do something explain the reasons why and, where possible, help the person identify someone else who can help
- 7.** Ensure you leave people with appropriate contact details at the end of your interaction



Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	11/03/2025
Report of:	Bryn Roberts, Director of Governance
Portfolio of:	Cllr Douglas, Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Policy, Strategy and Partnerships

Decision Report: Review of the City of York Council Scrutiny Function

Subject of Report

1. Following the February 2024, Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge of the City of York Council, the subsequent report presented to the Council's Executive in May 2024 stated: "Scrutiny arrangements at CYC would benefit from review. As a function of governance, it can be hugely beneficial for quality of decision-making if it is fully supported and empowered to be a positive and integral part of policy development. It is clear that this is recognised by the administration as an area where a fresh look at how improvements can be made would also be a good use of time and effort."
2. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) was therefore commissioned to undertake a Scrutiny Impact Review of the City of York Council. The review was conducted in November and December 2024.
3. This report provides Executive with the final CfGS recommendations following the Scrutiny Impact Review, and a proposed action plan to address each of the recommendations, for members' consideration.

Benefits and Challenges

4. The benefits of implementing the recommendations of the scrutiny impact review will be a strengthened scrutiny function, providing accountability; improved decision making through effective policy

development; enhanced public engagement; and an appropriate check and balance of the Executive decision making process.

5. The challenges of implementing the recommendations will be in ensuring that the resulting scrutiny structures are the right ones for CYC; in developing the vision, procedures and protocols set out in the Action Plan, with appropriate resource and expertise required to encourage and embed good scrutiny across the organisation.

Policy Basis for Decision

6. Overview and scrutiny committees were established in English and Welsh local authorities by the Local Government Act 2000. They were intended as a counterweight to the new executive structures created by that Act. Their role was to develop and review policy and make recommendations to the council. Relevant councils must have at least one overview and scrutiny committee.
7. The legislative provisions for overview and scrutiny committees for England are set out in Section 9F of the Act as amended by Localism Act 2011. These state:
 - Executive arrangements by a local authority must ensure that its overview and scrutiny committee has power (or its overview and scrutiny committees, and any joint overview and scrutiny committees, have power between them)—
 - to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
 - to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
 - to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
 - to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,

- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.
8. Overview and scrutiny committees must have the power to 'call in' decisions made by their executives but not yet implemented. The statutory minimum requirement is that "call in" enables the scrutiny committee to recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the person who made it.
 9. Local authorities also have limited powers of 'external scrutiny', where their committees look at issues which lie outside the council's responsibilities, with specific powers to scrutinise health bodies, community safety partnerships, and Police and Crime Commissioners.

Financial Strategy Implications

10. There will be costs associated with the provision of training for members and officers which can be met from existing budgets. The cost of adding a revised Scrutiny Officer post to the Democratic Services team can be partially met from within the current staffing budget of the Democratic Governance service. However, additional resource will be required, the exact amount being dependent on the outcome of a job evaluation exercise. Any change to the number of Scrutiny Committees will have an impact on the member allowance budget in respect of Special Responsibility Allowances for Committee Chairs.

Recommendation and Reasons

11. Executive is asked to consider the proposed recommendations set out in the Scrutiny Review Action Plan, at Annex B, alongside the comments received from the meeting of the Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 10 March and:
 - i) Instruct officers on the direction to be taken in respect of Review Recommendations 1-2, 4-7 and 9-12;
 - ii) Agree any recommendation to be presented to Full Council for determination, in respect of Review Recommendations 3 (substitute members) and 8 (Scrutiny Committee structure and membership).

Background

12. The City of York council Scrutiny structure currently consists of four Scrutiny Committees, each of which has 10 scheduled meetings each year:
 - Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee
 - Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee
 - Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee
 - Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
13. The Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee acts as the overarching committee, meeting separately as a “calling in” committee to consider call in requests.
14. The Scrutiny Impact Review process was conducted during November and December 2024, and consisted of an online, written survey of all members, followed by a series of interviews, mainly in person, but with some conducted via Teams/hybrid, with the following:
 - Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs
 - Executive Members
 - Leader of the Council
 - Deputy Leader of the Council
 - Labour Group members
 - Liberal Democrat and Conservative Group members
 - Liberal Democrat Group Leader
 - Conservative Group Leader
 - Former Scrutiny Chairs
 - Independent Member
 - Chief Operating Officer
 - Monitoring Officer
 - Chief Finance Officer
 - Labour Group Political Assistant
 - Liberal Democrat Group Political Assistant
15. The interviews consisted of questions and discussions, designed to identify views on the effectiveness of Scrutiny; the operating culture, behaviours, relationships, and mindset within the authority in relation to Scrutiny; the level of skills and capacity in the

organisation and the desire to change and improve the way that Scrutiny is undertaken.

16. The lead reviewer offered all Scrutiny and non-Executive members an opportunity to hear the draft recommendations at a briefing on 20 January 2025, and provided a separate briefing for Executive members on 28 January.
17. The draft recommendation report was received on 14 February and was circulated to Scrutiny Chairs, the three Group Leaders and the Chief Operating Officer, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer, with requests for comments and observations by Friday 21 February. The final recommendation report was received on Monday 24 February and is appended to this report at Annex A.
18. There are twelve recommendations contained within the report. The aim of the recommendations is, in very general terms, to seek to change the culture of the organisation in the way that it conducts scrutiny, to develop a shared vision across the authority and to ensure application of best practices along with statutory and non-statutory guidance, to ensure scrutiny processes are effective and aligned with national standards.
19. At Annex B is a proposed action plan, drafted by officers, for Executive to consider which recommendations they support and how they consider they can best be implemented. These are only suggestions; it is for members to determine the actions they wish to see implemented. It is also important to remember that no change is “final”; if a change is tried and is unsuccessful, it can be altered.
20. The Scrutiny Review report will be presented to the Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 10 March, and a formal note of that Committee’s comments on the proposals will be presented to Executive to consider alongside this report. All Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs have been invited to attend the CSCCSM meeting, to take part in the debate on the report.
21. One of the very strong recommendations from all members interviewed, was the need for a dedicated Scrutiny Officer to properly support and advise members to deliver good scrutiny across the organisation. There is potential capacity and resource within Democratic Governance to deliver this, however, the

capacity is partly dependent upon delivery of some of the other recommendations which will impact the number of committees and the frequency of formal meetings.

22. Members will note the proposed shift in focus of the format and purpose of the Scrutiny Committees, so that the bulk of the pre scrutiny work is undertaken by Task and Finish Groups (TFG). The Committees would be responsible for setting work plans, and for receiving the recommendations of the TFGs. Undertaking scrutiny in this way does not mean that scrutiny will be less visible; members have the power to decide whether it wishes to hold TFG meetings in the public domain. Further, membership of TFGs is not restricted to scrutiny members; any elected member with the interest, expertise and knowledge of the topic to be scrutinised may be appointed to a TFG. External participants may also be appointed. This therefore represents an opportunity to open up the interaction with the scrutiny process to a much wider audience.
23. Recommendation 8 concerns the structure of scrutiny committees, which it states should be better aligned to reflect council business and goes on to explain that this means fewer committees, not more. The suggested structure set out in the action plan reflects best practice as set out in the Good Scrutiny Guide and is based on a split between “People” and “Place”, with the “Place Committee” holding the statutory powers of call in, currently held by the Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee. However, this is just an officer suggestion, and it is for members to determine what that structure should be.
24. Recommendation 9 concerns the frequency of meetings, and there was some discussion at the briefing session for scrutiny members, where it was suggested that bi-monthly meetings would afford the opportunity for informal member briefings in the intervening months. The scrutiny agendas currently contain a lot of information items, and the review recommends that these should be presented to members in a different way, rather than taking up valuable space at business meetings. Along with member briefings, there is also work being undertaken within Democratic Governance to develop and strengthen the member training and development programme, with the potential to enhance the member internet portal to provide a library for information notes and briefings.

25. Many of the recommendations will require an ongoing programme of work, to develop the vision for scrutiny and the protocols and procedures that will provide the framework with which to deliver that vision. It is proposed that a working group be formed, and it is suggested that this comprises the current Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, to work with the Statutory Scrutiny Officer and relevant officers from the Democratic Services team, to develop those plans. At a suitable point, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council will be invited to meet with the Working Group to seek agreement on the shared vision, and on the protocols for collaboration and work planning.
26. Finally, the report recognises the need for robust training for members. It is proposed to commission appropriate training for scrutiny members, for Executive members and for officers.
27. Any recommended change to the Scrutiny Committee structure or the membership makeup of the Committees must be determined by Full Council. Any change to the procedure for appointment of substitute members to Committee must also be determined by Full Council.

Consultation Analysis

28. All elected members were offered the opportunity to complete a survey on the effectiveness of the Scrutiny function. All members were then offered either an individual or a group interview with the lead reviewer from CfGS.
29. The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, at their quarterly meeting on 28 February, requested that messages be posted on the Council's social media platforms to alert local residents to the review report and ask for comments; any received will be reported to the CSCCSM meeting on 10 March 2025.

Organisational Impact and Implications

- **Financial:** As set out at Paragraph 10.
- **Human Resources (HR):** The appropriate processes will be followed in respect of the establishment of a new Scrutiny Officer post that reflects the work required to support the scrutiny function through the implementation of the recommendations.

- **Legal:** The Council has a statutory duty to operate a scrutiny function.

Risks and Mitigations

30. Members have voiced their concerns during the review process that scrutiny does not currently operate as effectively as it could, therefore the risk of not implementing significant changes to the scrutiny function is that scrutiny does not improve.
31. Any risks associated with implementing changes to the scrutiny structures and procedures can be mitigated by undertaking regular reviews throughout the implementation period, to gauge the effectiveness of new procedures and, if necessary, advise on the need to amend and adapt. Further, the risk of imposing a new scrutiny regime on elected members can be mitigated by ensuring that an appropriately robust scrutiny training programme is delivered at an early stage.

Wards Impacted

32. All wards.

Contact details

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

Author

Name:	Bryn Roberts
Job Title:	Director of Governance
Service Area:	Governance
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	03/03/2025

Co-author

Name:	Lindsay Tomlinson
Job Title:	Head of Democratic Governance
Service Area:	Democratic Governance
Telephone:	07591 337143

Background papers

LGA Peer Review Report:

[LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report \(york.gov.uk\)](https://www.york.gov.uk/corporate-peer-challenge-final-report)

Statutory Guidance, Overview & Scrutiny:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-combined-authorities-and-combined-county-authorities/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-combined-authorities-and-combined-county-authorities>

CfGS the Good Scrutiny Digest:

[Resources - CFGS](#)

Annexes

Annex A: York Scrutiny Impact Report

Annex B: Draft Scrutiny Review Action Plan

This page is intentionally left blank

Scrutiny Impact Report City of York Council

Chief Operating Officer

City of York Council

Jan 2025

Dear Ian Floyd,

Scrutiny Improvement Review – CfGS consultancy support

I am writing to thank you for inviting the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to carry out an evaluation of City of York Council's Scrutiny function. This letter provides feedback on our review findings and offers suggestions on how the Council could further develop its scrutiny process.

Background to the review

City of York Council commissioned CfGS to advise and support its members and officers in the review of the Council's scrutiny function. City of York Council has recently undergone a change in political control. A recent Corporate Peer Challenge exercise carried out by the LGA highlighted the Council's new political ambitions but also noted the capacity and capability challenges associated with delivery against those ambitions. It also noted the need for action in respect of governance and culture – particularly in ensuring that members had the support needed to be able to carry out their role. There was a sense that the overview and scrutiny function needs resetting and rationalising to ensure that its impact can be maximised.

It is in this context that the Council has invited CfGS's assistance in undertaking a review of the function. The aim is to ensure that scrutiny is effective in delivering accountability, improving policy and decision making, and that the scrutiny function makes a quality contribution in the delivery of Council plans and overall improvement.

The review investigated four specific areas of scrutiny:

- Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose.
- Members leading and fostering good relationships.
- Prioritising work and using evidence well.
- Making an impact.

York has four scrutiny committees, meeting monthly, whose work is augmented with task and finish groups. In common with a number of other councils, there is no dedicated officer policy support for the scrutiny function.

Methodology

CfGS undertook a thorough review of the scrutiny arrangements, involving evidence gathering in person with Members and Officers on 25th and 26th November 2024.

CfGS met with elected Members and Officers, including the Leader, Cabinet Members, the Scrutiny Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs, Scrutiny Members, and the Council's

Draft Report – Not for publication

senior leadership team. We ran a survey for Members from Tuesday 12th November to Monday 9th December with 26 responses. How representative was this data set?

We also undertook observations of the Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee in person and other scrutiny committee recordings and documents online.

The review was conducted by:

- Camilla de Bernhardt Lane – Director of Practice, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny
- Antony Mullen – Research Analyst, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

The findings and recommendations presented in this letter are intended to advise City of York Council in how to strengthen the quality of Scrutiny activities, increasing the impact of its outputs, and to develop a strong and shared understanding of the role and capability of the Scrutiny function.

Findings

The large majority of those who engaged with the review commented upon the desire and commitment to make Scrutiny work. However, the majority of views shared in the interviews were negative about the current impact and approach of Scrutiny. Comments ranged from saying that it was inefficient to being actively hostile we heard that '*Scrutiny doesn't work*'. This sentiment is clearly summarised in the question from the survey:

How would you rate the effectiveness of scrutiny overall:

2.12

Average Rating



1. Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose

- 1.1. Creating a robust organisational culture supportive of Scrutiny is essential for effective governance. It is necessary to establish an environment that not only acknowledges but also values the role of Scrutiny in enhancing accountability and public service delivery. In turn Scrutiny is expected to use its delegated authority, soft powers of access and influence to hold the Cabinet to account, support policy development, contribute to improved decision-making, and channel the voice of the public. This is achieved through collaboration and strong constructive challenge, based on quality information and robust questioning strategies. A good Scrutiny function is one that provides not only effective challenge but is recognised and valued as a body that positively informs policy development.

Draft Report – Not for publication

- 1.2. Currently at York there is a tendency to see Scrutiny through the lens of political challenge. This in turn results in frayed relationships and in reciprocated defensive behaviours.

There were several underlying causes for these challenges raised in the conversations:

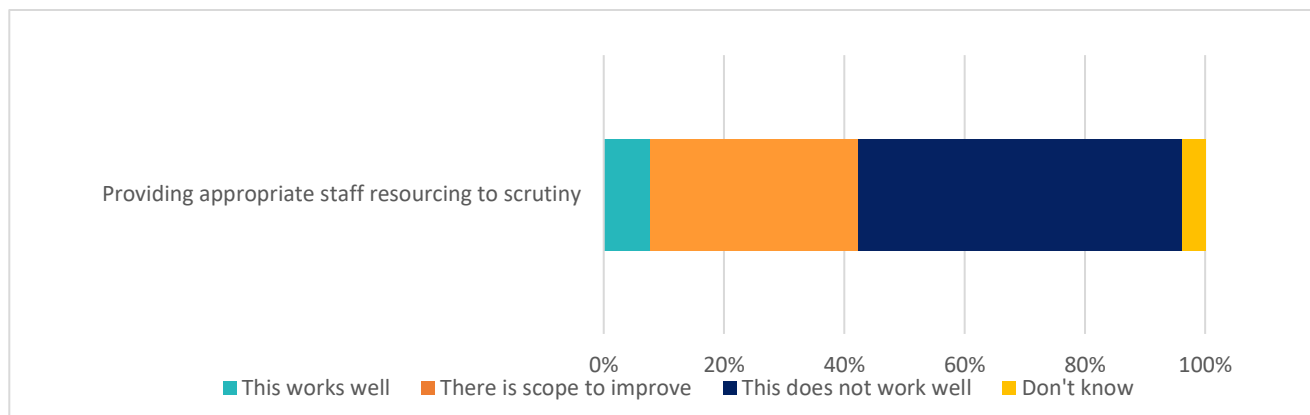
- A long-established culture of the politicisation of Scrutiny in York. This makes it difficult for Members to break from the pattern. New Members learn about Scrutiny through the experience of current practices - often feeling the expectation to replicate this model.
 - The public context of Scrutiny means that Members' contributions can be readily shared and promoted through engagement and media reporting.
 - Not having dedicated independent officer support to neutrally promote the value that scrutiny can bring, particularly to policy and direction setting and task groups.
 - Frequent Scrutiny meetings with lengthy papers and unclear impact. This creates high demands on staff, both to support the meetings and to attend to provide information and presentations with unclear outcomes.
 - Poor attendance and engagement at meetings.
 - Frustration at the lack of task groups, and the general lack of contribution to policy development.
- 1.3. We suggest that by working to support and develop clarity over the role of scrutiny, the Council has the opportunity to step outside political machinations and develop a mature relationship where all members of the council feel that they have a valued role in good governance at York.

Recommendation 1. The Council should work to develop a shared vision and understanding of scrutiny.

Officer support for Scrutiny

- 1.4. There is currently a small democratic services team which supports Scrutiny and policy committees. In practice the support given is in the form of committee administration, preparing minutes and agendas and sourcing and administering reports for formal meetings. This support is welcomed and valued. However, a comment that was repeated in both the survey and in conversations was that democratic services was under resourced.
- 1.5. In the survey, more than 50% respondents say providing appropriate support did not work well with 35% saying there is scope to improve, and less than 10% saying it did work well, as demonstrated below:

Draft Report – Not for publication



- 1.6. A need was expressed for a dedicated role which provides the specialist skills needed to support policy development and critical friend challenge. This point was most pertinent when discussing task and finish groups. York in the large part does not currently run task groups. If they occur, they are entirely at Member's discretion as they have no support from democratic services officers.

'Without dedicated Scrutiny officer time, Scrutiny has struggled in the past 5 years.'

'Task Group reviews are few and far between, most probably because of the absence of any officer support.'

- 1.7. There needs to be a development and application of methodology, approach and clear management of task and finish groups for this way of working to add value. It is likely that specialist officer support could help to provide this rigour as well as to provide research and learning from other councils to inform policy.

Recommendation 2. The Council should employ a dedicated Scrutiny officer to enhance the impact and practice of Scrutiny, in particular task group investigations. Skills for this role would include research, project management and policy development. On-going training and support for the Scrutiny officer should also be considered particularly if recruited internally, to support the role to achieve good Scrutiny.

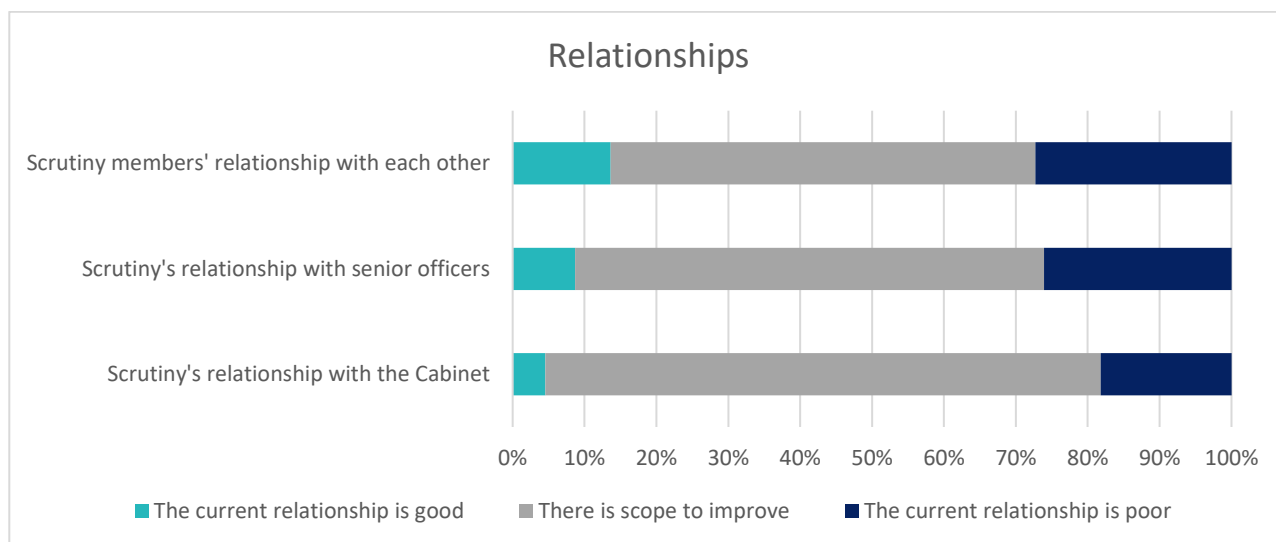
2. Members leading and fostering good relationships.

Steps to take the politics out of scrutiny.

- 2.1. It was expressed that members of scrutiny committees are there first as party members, and second as scrutiny members. This is demonstrated in committee members sitting on party lines when in committee and in the approach to substitute members on committees.
- 2.2. We heard that substitutes are often found to make up numbers to ensure that if there is a vote taken then the majority party can ensure success. This approach runs contrary to developing a team beyond politics, where issues and evidence are of most importance.

Recommendation 3. Substitute members of committees should be limited in number and named individuals, rather than allowing any Cllr to act as a substitute at any given time.

- 2.3. Relationships are a key element that contributes to the success of scrutiny. It is clear through the interviews and the survey findings that there is room for improvement on how well relationships currently function. This is demonstrated in answers on the chart below. Scrutiny Member's relationship with each other, scrutiny officers, senior officers and Cabinet is seen as poor or has scope to improve in 90% of respondents.

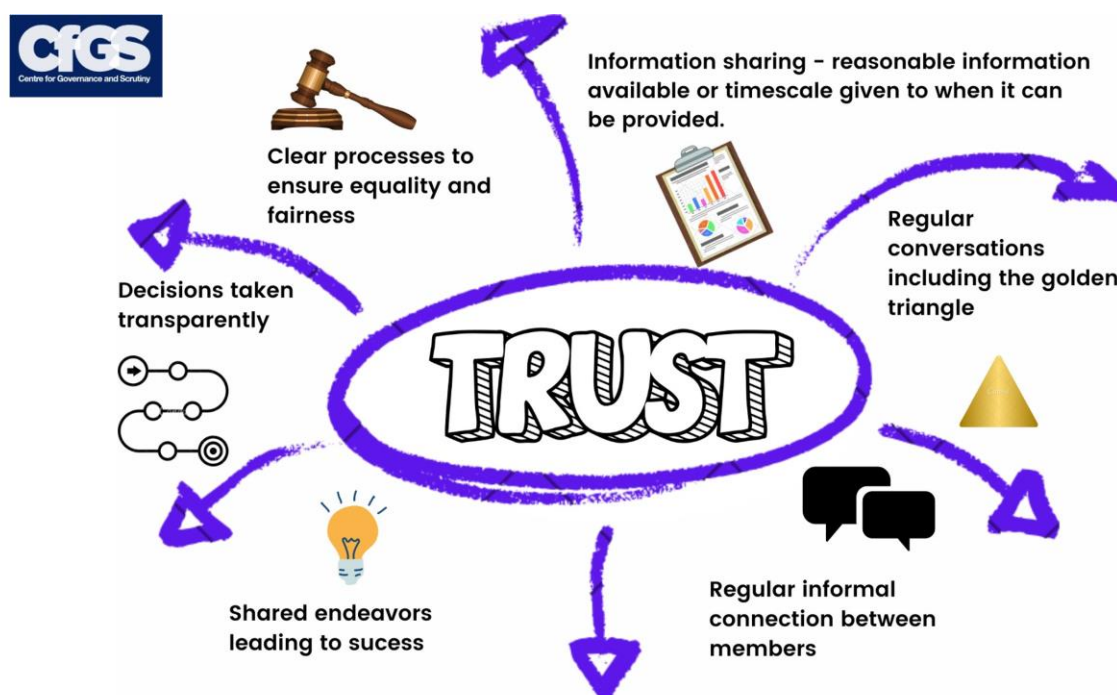


- 2.4. Trust is the foundation of effective governance, scrutiny, and collaboration. It is built and sustained through intentional actions and behaviours that prioritise transparency, fairness, communication, and shared purpose. Decisions should be made through clear, accessible, and well-documented processes that involve input from relevant stakeholders. Sharing the rationale behind decisions, including the options considered and the criteria used, helps others understand and accept the outcomes, even if they may not fully agree.
- 2.5. Clear processes should be in place to ensure that everyone is treated consistently and equitably. Sharing relevant updates and decisions proactively prevents misunderstandings and fosters a sense of inclusion. If certain information cannot be immediately available, it is

Draft Report – Not for publication

important to communicate realistic timelines for when it will be shared. Working with senior officers to foster personal connections helps build rapport and mutual understanding.

- 2.6. Collaborative discussions, where all voices are valued, allow for collective problem-solving and strengthen cohesion. Informal interactions between members also play a significant role in building trust. Networking opportunities, casual conversations provide space for individuals to connect on a personal level, developing camaraderie and reducing barriers to communication.
- 2.7. Finally, collaborating on shared goals and celebrating successes strengthens trust and reinforces the value of working together. Clearly defined objectives give everyone a sense of purpose and direction. Creating a culture that values shared endeavours leads to stronger bonds and more successful outcomes.



- 2.8. An approach to invite conversation and to strengthen relationships beyond politics is through a meaningful revisit of the Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol. A review of this type can provide an opportunity to reflect on how well the Protocol is supporting the relationship between Scrutiny and the Executive, ensuring it remains relevant and effective. In approaching this review, we would suggest a process to encourage open dialogue starting by discussing how the protocol has been used in practice, and how it could usefully be applied in future. In this approach both sides can identify areas where it has supported positive collaboration and where improvements are needed.

This shared reflection allows for the development of solutions that are informed by past experiences and rooted in shared goals.

Consideration should be given to:

Draft Report – Not for publication

- Mutual respect and understanding and recognition of each other's roles
- Regular, structured communication
- Transparency and openness in sharing information
- Collaborative approach to policy development
- Regular briefings with the Executive to stay informed and aligned with the direction of the council.

Recommendation 4. Revisit and refresh the Cabinet/Scrutiny protocol, including the establishment of regular structured meetings between Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs and relevant Cabinet Member(s) to discuss collaboration and future mutual priorities and upcoming decisions and projects.

Approaching budget scrutiny

- 2.9. A structured approach to scrutinising council finances is essential for ensuring transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making. It helps build public trust by demonstrating responsible management of funds while detecting inefficiencies, waste, or fraud. Additionally, structured scrutiny supports the development and monitoring of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), ensuring that financial decisions align with long-term priorities and sustainable service delivery. By taking a forward-looking approach, councils can assess future funding pressures, allocate resources efficiently, and maintain financial stability. Structured scrutiny also promotes consistency and fairness by objectively examining all financial aspects, preventing bias or selective oversight.
- 2.10. Members have been having quarterly finance reports to committee. However, these do not appear to have tangible impact on good decisions or governance of the authority. It is difficult to ascertain what has changed as a result of these reports being presented to scrutiny. When reviewing the minutes of these reports they are only 'noted'. No recommendations are made to the Executive on proposed different direction, or to highlight areas of concern. Instead, they appear to be used as a gateway to discuss the effective running of the service area in question. This takes up committee time in discussion but adds very little value.
- 2.11. We have heard that for the first time this year scrutiny had the opportunity to review the results of the budget consultation. However, the conversation tended to focus more on Member's views of how the questions were arrived at, than looking at the trends and views of the public.
- 2.12. Scrutiny should focus on key areas that ensure effective resource management by reviewing how resources are allocated, monitored, and used, paying close attention to the council's budgeting process - from planning to delivery. Financial and service planning should be aligned, and it is here where scrutiny can add value. Asking questions about delivery and service planning, informed by financial understanding. In this way scrutiny should prioritise strategic oversight rather than getting lost in minor details. This includes assessing whether resources are being used wisely, ensuring they align with priorities and deliver value for money, fairness, and social benefits.

Recommendation 5. Scrutiny taking a more deliberate and planned approach to budget scrutiny throughout the year. This should include a focus upon service delivery beyond finances.

2.13. Further clarity on the respective roles and the relationship between the Scrutiny committee and the Audit committee would also be valuable, particularly in the areas of finance and assurance frameworks. Below is an infographic which describes the difference between the functions of audit and scrutiny as well as where they overlap.

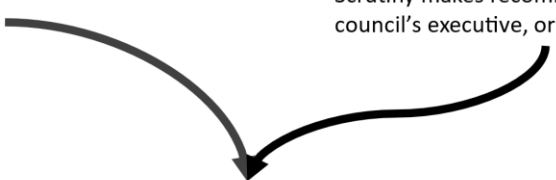
Audit vs Scrutiny

Audit:

- Assurance on good governance and decision making
- Improving value for money Improving public reporting and accountability
- Embedding ethical values and countering fraud
- Effective risk management
- Effective internal controls
- Effective audit and assurance

Scrutiny

- May look at anything which affects the area or the area's inhabitants:
- Range of methods to do this – taking reports or carrying out research in “task and finish” groups.
- Scrutiny makes recommendations to the council's executive, or to other local bodies.

- 
- Reviewing regular finance and performance reports;
 - Reviewing council commercial activity, including oversight of procurement;
 - General review of value for money arrangements

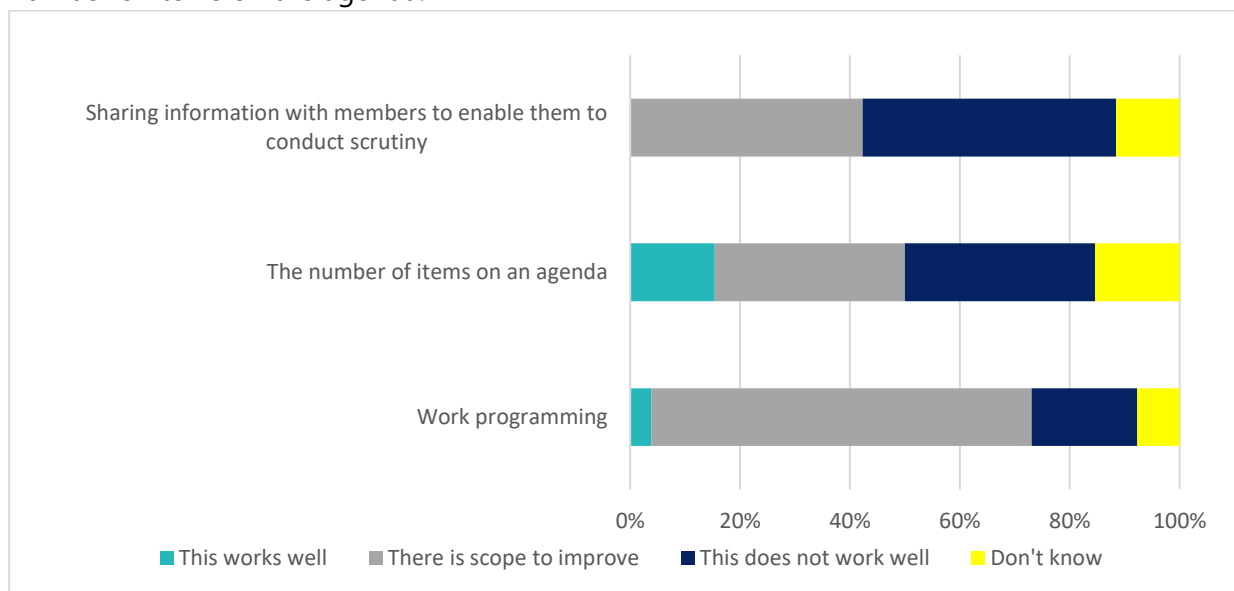
3. Prioritising work and using evidence well.

- 3.1. Developing a comprehensive work programme enables Scrutiny committees to structure their activities methodically. Prioritising issues of strategic importance ensures that Scrutiny efforts are directed towards areas with the greatest potential for impact. This strategic focus enables authorities to allocate resources efficiently and address pressing concerns effectively. It is important to ensure Members can coordinate their questions and contributions with the work programme.
- 3.2. Current work programmes are thin, with only one or two items for future meetings. Many of the items on the work programme are 'for information' or are update reports. For these items it would be difficult for scrutiny to do more than 'to note' the reports, and therefore scrutiny can add little value. It is also unclear why issues are chosen for scrutiny to look at. It is equally unclear what members would like to focus upon and why. At best this approach allows a skimming over the surface of issues, but not a structured or focussed approach to Scrutiny. It is unclear if scrutiny considers why issues should come to committee. It was also drawn to our attention that the

Draft Report – Not for publication

Executive forward plan could be more detailed to support Scrutiny intelligence about the issues that the Executive will be considering.

- 3.3. As demonstrated on the chart below, respondents to the survey also did not find work programming to be effective, with 7% saying that work programming works well, but about 75% saying there is scope to improve, and 20% saying that it does not work well. The majority of respondents also saw scope to improve or not working well for sharing information and the number of items on the agenda.



- 3.4. We suggest there are opportunities to consolidate and coordinate meetings more efficiently to enable Scrutiny to focus on a more focused set of priorities. In the first instance we would recommend establishing a more robust work programme across all the thematic areas to guide this work. This would help identify the core purpose and activities for Scrutiny.

The following elements should be present in good work programming practice:

- Using a consistent work planning tool to support each body to create a balanced work plan that is manageable and logical.
- Focusing on key issues where Scrutiny can make a significant impact.
- Working closely with senior Officers and Cabinet Members to understand the most challenging issues around Council delivery and outcomes.
- Identifying the areas where there are already robust forms of accountability and Scrutiny in the Council and wider system – where possible avoid replication or where added-value is minimal.
- Less is often more – focusing on two or three substantive issues in a meeting.
- Linking the work planning to the scoping process for specific review topics.
- Embedding public engagement activities more centrally to the planning process.

More guidance on approaching work programming is available here: [Planning and Priority Setting - A Practice Guide - CFGS](#)

Recommendation 6. Review and enhance the scrutiny work planning process – supporting a Member-led work plan to include:

- 6.a. A refreshed annual process that uses systematic scrutiny tools to identify and prioritise agenda items, key lines of enquiry and potential impact.
- 6.b. The justification for inclusion of items on the work programme needs to be clearer, and subject to a set of criteria agreed by members cross-party.
- 6.c. Scrutiny agendas, as far as practicable, exclude items which are for basic information sharing or 'approval' or where scrutiny cannot clearly add value. Freeing capacity on agendas for more substantial items.
- 6.d. The Executive forward plan to be more detailed and planned so that scrutiny can have sight of issues that may be of interest in appropriate timeframes to meaningfully contribute.
- 6.e. Consideration to be given to how written reports to the scrutiny committee can be presented in ways that enable Members to identify key issues, areas for challenge and opportunities for service improvement – this includes reviewing the ways that information and data is presented.

4. Making an impact.

Call in

- 4.1. The situation with call-in is symptomatic of the wider political nature of scrutiny in York. Call-in can be a useful tool for scrutiny, but it is not the only approach. We heard that there have been seven calls-in in 18 months, with no call-ins upheld. It was reported that call-in is used as a mechanism for political point scoring and to send the message; 'we don't like the decisions that you have made'. This is observable in the minutes from these meetings as well as watching the webcasts of the meetings themselves. It is our judgement that this is not an appropriate or productive use of the call-in mechanism.

'Call-in provides a mechanism for councillors to intervene when they feel that a decision being made by the executive needs to be revisited (or possibly changed). It should, however, be regarded as a measure that is only needed in exceptional circumstances, rather than day-to-day. It sits in the context of a range of other tools at Scrutiny's disposal to influence decision making.

The law says that Scrutiny has a power to review or scrutinise decisions made but not implemented by the executive, which includes a power to recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the person who made it. Statutory guidance exists to govern how councils carry out call-in work.'

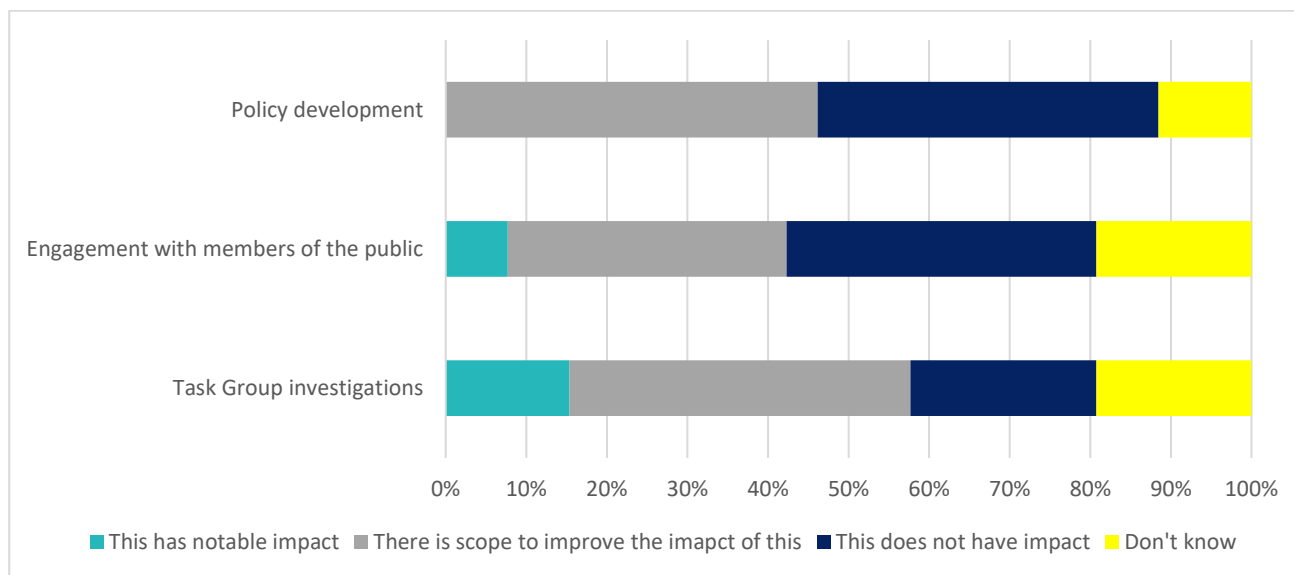
[CfGS Good Scrutiny guide]

Draft Report – Not for publication

- 4.2. Better practice would see pre-decision scrutiny, where scrutiny has sufficient time to meaningfully contribute recommendations and change to executive plans. This would involve a positive working relationship between senior leaders, both officers and members and scrutiny where there are open lines of communication. Scrutiny should be able to have clear sight of policies and developments that will be decided.

Scrutiny contributing to good governance

- 4.3. York would benefit from gaining greater clarity on how scrutiny contributes to the good governance of the organisation. When asked, Members and officers had difficulty pointing to a consistent and developed impact that scrutiny has made. This is demonstrated on the chart below showing responses to the survey. Only 15% of respondents said that task group investigations have notable impact, this is likely because they rarely occur. Engagement with members of the public has less than 10% of respondents saying that it has notable impact. While policy development has no respondents at all saying that it has impact. It is clear that despite the frequency of committee meetings, scrutiny is not having the impact that it should have.



- 4.4. Allied to recommendation 2, 'employing a dedicated scrutiny officer', York should take a deliberate approach to instigate task groups. We would recommend that focussing upon policy development, at least for the first task groups undertaken would help to move the focus of scrutiny to a position beyond politics. This should be done in liaison with Exec Members so that scrutiny can appreciate where there is a need for policy development or review.

Recommendation 7. Undertake policy development in the form of task groups. This move would also require the timely awareness of scrutiny in issues that are being developed or decided upon, as scrutiny would need to undertake deep-dive work on areas where it could make a tangible difference.

Draft Report – Not for publication

- 4.5. In the survey when we asked in a free text box what would make the difference in scrutiny, the following answers were given. For ease of presentations and for inferences to be drawn they have been amalgamated where it was felt appropriate to do so.



Committee structure

- 4.6. In the interest of further supporting good planning, we suggest a review of the current arrangements of scrutiny committees. Our research highlights that there is no 'ideal' scrutiny structure or optimum number of committees. There is not a perfect correlation between the size and number of committees and their effectiveness, but there is a clear connection between having a clarity of purpose and a function that adds value and realises impact. In York we were told that Exec Members's portfolios do not match the arrangements of scrutiny committees, nor does the organisation of the council. This leads to inefficiencies where there is a lack of clarity and senior officers, and portfolio holders may be required to report to go to several scrutiny committees within a short amount of time. However, there are frequent changes to Exec portfolios, and potentially to departmental structures so it would be unhelpful to shackle the arrangement of scrutiny to these.
- 4.7. In any change, York should consider the balance of the impact of scrutiny activity. By this we mean that deep dive work in the form of task groups and policy development should make up a much greater portion of scrutiny endeavours. The role of the committee is important in ensuring transparency and making recommendations to the Executive. However, it is only one approach to scrutiny working, where different approaches should be used together to best effect and ultimately to achieve impact.

Recommendation 8. That the Council consider reviewing the alignment of committees to better reflect the business of the Council. This would bring greater clarity as to which officers or lead members were accountable to which committee. As part of this work the Council should consider reducing the number of committees and possibly the number of councillors on those committees.

Draft Report – Not for publication

Frequency and organisation of Meetings

- 4.8. A frequent concern that was raised in the conversations was the amount of time taken up sitting in scrutiny committees. Scrutiny committee meetings for all four scrutiny committees take place almost monthly. This leads to somewhere in the region of forty public meetings each year. However, the impact of scrutiny is limited, despite the large organisational commitment to service these committees. We suggest a rethink of the frequency of these meetings, with a view to having more impact and less time in last-minute discussions.
- 4.9. We heard that there is often little difference in papers that go to Cabinet and those to Scrutiny, because of the time limited proximity of Scrutiny meeting before Cabinet. This gives limited scope for Scrutiny to make detailed and considered recommendations, as the substantive part of the policy, or decision has already been worked out. Subsequently Scrutiny can be critical, and there is room to make political points, but in essence what is reported is mostly a 'fait accompli'. A more effective, and potentially less political, approach would see Scrutiny as an important part of the decision-making process. With this approach we would expect that Scrutiny members would be engaged in decisions or policy at a substantially earlier stage than currently occurs.

Recommendation 9. That the frequency of Scrutiny Committee meetings be reviewed with a view to having fewer formal meetings, but developing scope for greater focus, preparation, including briefings and review work.

- 4.10. In a separate but related point, reports to Scrutiny committees would benefit from a review of their form and structure to enable the committee to access the key information and data they need to formulate effective questions. The length, usability and timeliness of reports can support effective Scrutiny meetings. Both Members and Officers identified the challenges of ensuring the Scrutiny committee has the right level of detail. Proposals around creating a Scrutiny-focused structure for reports with strong cabinet summaries were recognised as being helpful.
- 4.11. To develop enthusiasm for policy development and for scrutiny in its own right it is important to demonstrate the impact that scrutiny has. Telling the narrative of scrutiny activity and impact is useful to reinforce the self-identity of the function. An annual report can help in this respect to promote the impact and share the learning from scrutiny.

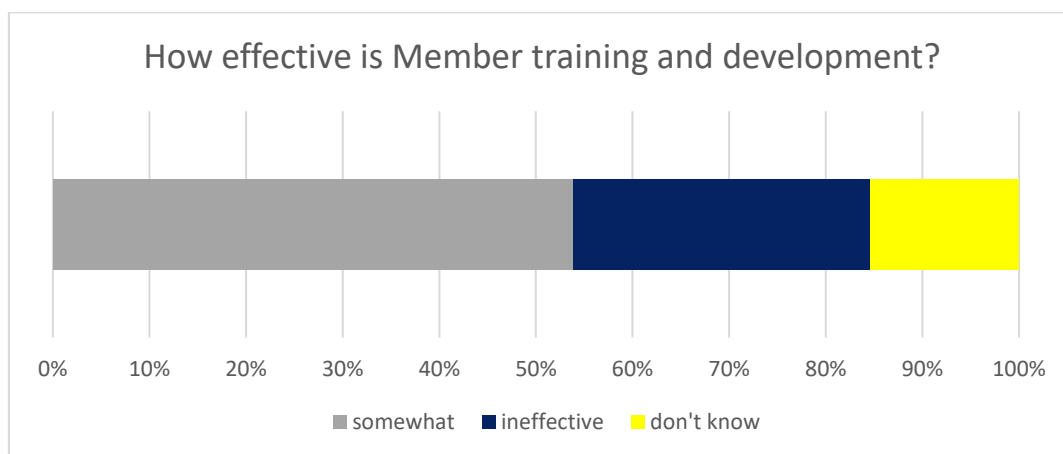
Recommendation 10. Introduce a formal process to track recommendations that Scrutiny makes.

Recommendation 11. Reinstate the process of having an annual scrutiny report but update the format to focus on the impact and difference that scrutiny has made.

Draft Report – Not for publication

Member training and development

- 4.12. We heard that many Members in York are newly elected councillors because of the cyclical nature of political control. Members learn how to undertake scrutiny from the existing practices in the authority. This means that poor practices can often be reinforced with new councillors. Whilst there is an induction programme, which many members have benefitted from, it was clear in our research that more training would be desirous.
- 4.13. There was a clear divergence in answers in the survey when asked about training, with some members being very clear about the offer, and others quite unsure about whether training in scrutiny had been offered. When asked about the effectiveness of member training and development, no respondents said that it was 'very' effective, with 80% of respondents saying that it was either somewhat effective or ineffective. In the free text box it was particularly mentioned that examples of 'what good scrutiny looks like' would be helpful.



Recommendation 12. A programme of ongoing training for members in undertaking good scrutiny, which could include work programming as well as coaching for chairs.

Thank you and acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Chairs, Members of Scrutiny Committees, Executive Members and Officers who took part in interviews for their time, insights and open views.

Yours sincerely,

Camilla de Bernhardt Lane

Director of Practice

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny | 77 Mansell Street | London | E1 8AN

Tel: 020 7543 5627 / Mob: 07831 510381 (preferred) cfgs.org.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

CYC SCRUTINY IMPACT REVIEW
PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

	ACTION	PROPOSAL	WHO	WHEN
1.	The Council should work to develop a shared vision and understanding of scrutiny	A working group be established, to develop proposals. The working group to then meet with the Leader & Deputy Leader to discuss and agree.	Current scrutiny chairs and vice chairs (May choose to co- opt others from time to time, e.g. Chair and deputy of A&G)	Commencing March 2025 and ongoing
2.	The Council should employ a dedicated Scrutiny officer to enhance the impact and practice of Scrutiny, in particular task group investigations. Skills for this role would include research, project management and policy development. On-going training and support for the Scrutiny officer should also be considered particularly if recruited internally, to support the role to achieve good Scrutiny	The structure of the DS team is being reviewed to add a dedicated Scrutiny Officer to the establishment.	LT/BR	Implement May/June 2025
3.	Substitute members of committees should be limited in number and named individuals rather than allowing any Cllr to act as a substitute at any given time	Members to determine if they wish to change the current arrangement for CSCCSM which is that the requirement for named subs can be overridden by the COO, MO /HODG if requested.	Council, following recommendation by Executive with Scrutiny views taken into account	March 2025

4.	Revisit and refresh the Cabinet/Scrutiny protocol, including the establishment of regular structured meetings between Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs and relevant Cabinet Member(s) to discuss collaboration and future mutual priorities and upcoming decisions and projects	Working group established under Rec 1 above, to take this work forward and discuss/agree with Leader and Deputy Leader once proposals have been developed.	Working Group/LT/DSO/Scrutiny Officer	Commencing March 2025 and ongoing
5.	Scrutiny taking a more deliberate and planned approach to budget scrutiny throughout the year. This should include a focus upon service delivery beyond finances	Scrutiny ctees to develop proposals in consultation with Chief Finance Officer	Working Group/Scrutiny Ctees/DM/LT/Scrutiny Officer	Commencing March 2025 and ongoing
6.	Review and enhance the scrutiny work planning process – supporting a Member-led work plan	Working Group to lead; other members, eg Leader /Executive members to be co-opted to the group as appropriate	Working Group/Scrutiny Ctees/LT/Scrutiny Officer	Commencing March 2025 and ongoing
7.	Undertake policy development in the form of task groups. This move would also require the timely awareness of scrutiny in issues that are being developed or decided upon, as scrutiny would need to undertake deep-dive work on areas where it could make a tangible difference.	As above – structured approach to TFG work throughout each year	Scrutiny/Executive	Commencing May 2025

8.	<p>That the Council consider reviewing the alignment of committees to better reflect either the departmental organisation, or Cabinet portfolios.</p> <p>This would bring greater clarity as to which officers or lead members were accountable to which committee. As part of this work the Council should consider reducing the number of committees and possibly the number of councillors on those committees</p>	<p>Proposal to restructure: two scrutiny committees –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and Place Scrutiny Committee (11 members) – this committee to have call in powers • People Services Scrutiny Committee (9 members) <p>Elected member and wider resident and partner involvement to be strengthened and enhanced through participation in properly supported Task and Finish groups.</p>	Council, following recommendation by Executive with Scrutiny views taken into account	March 2025
9.	That the frequency of Scrutiny Committee meetings be reviewed with a view to having fewer formal meetings, but developing scope for greater focus, preparation, including briefings and review work	Formal meetings to be scheduled bi-monthly. Information reports to be made available by alternate means, eg bi-monthly briefing sessions (Teams/hybrid) and member portal library	Executive, with Scrutiny views taken into account	March 2025
10.	Introduce a formal process to track recommendations that Scrutiny makes.	Modern Gov action tracking functionality to be utilised	DSO team/LT/Scrutiny Officer	May 2025
11.	Reinstate the process of having an annual scrutiny report but update the format to focus on the impact and difference that scrutiny has made	Scrutiny Officer will liaise with scrutiny chairs to produce annual report detailing work undertaken throughout the year, benefits and value realised etc	Scrutiny Officer/LT/Scrutiny Chairs	March 2026

		and a look forward to the coming year.		
12.	A programme of ongoing training for members in undertaking good scrutiny, which could include work programming as well as coaching for chairs	<p>Working with LGA to develop training programme to encompass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny member training • TFG training • Executive member training • Officer training 	LT/DSO team	To begin delivery May 2025