



## **Notice of a public meeting of**

### **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**

**To:** Councillors Fenton (Chair), Merrett (Vice-Chair), Ayre, Baxter, Coles, K Taylor, Watson, Wells and Widdowson

**Date:** Wednesday, 1 October 2025

**Time:** 5.30 pm

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

### **AGENDA**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

To receive and note apologies for absence.

**2. Declarations of Interest** (Pages 5 - 6)

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.

[Please see the attached sheet for further guidance for Members.]

### **3. 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 committee.

**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 Monday, 29 September 2025.**

To register to speak please visit [www.york.gov.uk/AttendCouncilMeetings](http://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.

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### **4. Major Projects - Castle and Eye Project (Pages 7 - 56)**

Members will receive an update report on the Castle and Eye project covering the status of funding, delivery approach and preparedness.

### **5. Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy (Pages 57 - 88)**

Members will consider the draft corporate communications and engagement strategy which outlines how the council will communicate with residents, businesses, partners, community groups and stakeholders.

### **6. City of York Council's Size Submission - Report to the Boundary Commission, Phase One, October 2025**

[Report to follow.]

## **7. Urgent Business**

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officer:

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

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

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### Declarations of Interest – guidance for Members

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

Type of Interest	You must
Disclosable Pecuniary Interests	Disclose the interest, not participate in the discussion or vote, and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a dispensation.
Other Registrable Interests (Directly Related) <b>OR</b> Non-Registrable Interests (Directly Related)	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.
Other Registrable Interests (Affects) <b>OR</b> Non-Registrable Interests (Affects)	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 dispensation.

- (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.



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**Corporate Scrutiny****1 October 2025**

Report of the Director of City Development

**Major Projects – Castle & Eye Project****Summary**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny with an update on the Castle and Eye project including funding status and delivery approach and preparedness.
2. The report asks Scrutiny to consider and support the Executive in the next steps for the delivery of each of the scheme as follows:
  - a) Noting the design development, planning progress and cost plan iteration of the Castle & Eye scheme, and works now also proposed to Coppergate Carpark to mitigate parking, access and Council income impacts.
  - b) Establishing the project delivery funding package and approach, and agreeing delegations for management of the same. Approving procurement activity commencing, and associated delegations (letting of contract subject to full funding confirmation).
  - c) Agreeing the permanent closure of Castle Carpark to non-blue badge holders as part of this.

**Background**

3. The Castle & Eye scheme offers a major opportunity to transform and reimagine a prominent and important part of York City Centre,
4. In November 2023, the Executive approved an approach to the Castle & Eye Scheme to reframe as a viable and deliverable proposition within funding envelopes as well as making key changes to the project including retention of blue badge parking and provision of flexible greenspace which includes children's play provision. The changes were made to ensure the continued delivery of positive outcomes for the

regeneration of this part of the city, in accordance with both the original master plan principles, and the approved Council Plan and “Our City Centre” Vision. They also ensure that the scheme delivers against the three key city strategies (Climate Change, Economy, Health, and Wellbeing) that were approved in December 2022.

5. Since this time, the scheme has been progressed in accordance with these approvals. This progress has included further design work and engagement with key stakeholders and the public to shape and influence the revised scheme. Cost planning and value engineering activity has taken place as part of this to achieve a deliverable scheme, alongside technical assessment work to prepare business case and planning submissions, and in July, revised planning submissions were made.
6. This report updates on the current status of the project, and summarises the next steps and executive decisions required to progress to delivery. Corporate Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment and make recommendations on the proposed approach.

## **Update and Next Steps**

### Project Development

7. In response to key project changes agreed in November 2023, further technical and design development work has been undertaken, also drawing on the existing wealth of engagement feedback to date, and work already undertaken, to develop revised concept design plans. These were tested with key stakeholders and the public between May and September 2024
8. Working with My Future York, a formal public consultation ran from the 15 August until the 20 September 2024. The consultation used a number of vehicles to engage communities and develop proposals. The Castle Gateway Advisory group (a group of external stakeholders in the city including the Civic Trust, York Museums Trust, York Bid, Make it York, Environment Agency, English Heritage, Historic England, York Crown Court), as well as other key stakeholders including the Bid Board, Liberal Jewish Community, the York Access Forum and the owners of the Cooperate Centre, were also consulted.
9. This extensive engagement received widespread positive response and helped to develop the design proposals further. Feedback is summarised on the My Castle Gateway Blog:  
<https://mycastlegateway.org/2024/11/21/revised-concept-proposals-for->



castle-and-eye-of-york-summer-2024-responses-via-all-engagement-routes/

10. Shaped by this process, revised plans were submitted to the pending planning application on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025, and statutory determination is now underway. Key changes between the original scheme and 2025 resubmission are illustrated in summary form at Appendix 1.

Cost and Funding Update

11. As an intrinsic part of the design development work, value engineering and cost plan iteration work was undertaken by consultants Turner and Townsend to ensure that, in line with the 2023 Executive decision, the scheme is more capable of delivery within funding parameters. The cost plan continues to be iterated and developed as the scheme progresses through planning, and in preparation for tendering works. The cost plan currently indicates that the Castle & Eye scheme can be delivered at a cost of £7.634m plus potential Hostile Vehicle Measures (HVM) measures of between £0.4-0.9m, and project costs of £1.2m, giving a total cost envelope of between £9.234m and £9.734m. This is a significant reduction from the previously £15m scheme (in 2022) but retains the majority of the scope and quality aspirations from the original Masterplan of which this project forms part.
12. To help mitigate car parking impacts and loss of council income resulting from the planned changes, work has also been undertaken to explore improvements that could be made to the existing Coppergate Carpark, to make it a more usable and attractive proposition to car drivers in this part of the city, and best utilise its current residual capacity. These capital works include the provision of physical infrastructure to make the carpark accessible 24 hours (including VNPR, CCTV etc), as well as improved signage/ digital information and cosmetic improvements. The capital cost of these works is currently estimated at £200k, in addition to the costs identified at paragraph 11 above, and taking the whole project outturn costs to between £9.434 and £9.934m
13. Previous executive decisions on the project have also included the commitment for the authority to invest alongside partners West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to realise the regeneration scheme. A capital contribution of £3.911m has been made available to the project, alongside £4.523m from WYCA. WYCA will need to give confirmation that the use of the funding remains eligible – a positive dialogue has started in this respect. Spend to date in progressing the scheme against these allocations leaves a current residual budget of £8.434m.

14. With total scheme costs (including Coppergate Carpark works) of £9.434 to £9.934m, this results in an additional borrowing or funding requirement of £1-1.5m for the project to be deliverable against current funding availability. This cost pressure will be managed within the existing Capital Programme or through securing additional external funding support for the scheme.

### Technical Assessment

15. The re-purposing of Castle car park will bring significant benefits to the city: retaining and improving blue badge accessibility close to the city, providing a central amenity and green space that will benefit families' health and wellbeing, and increasing connectivity and promote sustainable transport modes. The proposals represent a more socially equitable and 'place-based' approach to use of prime City Centre land and dramatically improve the setting for the nationally important historic buildings and heritage assets in the area. The scheme will also act as a catalyst for the wider Castle Gateway masterplan area, with projects brought forward for delivery as funding and viability permit.
16. As well as these significant benefits, the works will remove non blue-badge parking facilities close to the centre, with impacts on Council revenue and travel movements. Analysis reveals that these impacts are manageable though, with significant capacity in other existing facilities, and in scenarios where Castle Carpark is retained, a degree of reduction in parking levels and capital expenditure is still required.
17. Following previous executive approvals, a formal decision to close the Castle Car Park is required before further work on procuring and delivering the scheme can commence. As stated elsewhere in this report, the closure of Castle Car Park will result in an estimated loss of revenue to the Council - an estimated net sum of £0.5m per year is being taken forward for budget setting purposes, reflecting a conservative approach.
18. This is informed by further technical assessment work undertaken around car parking in the local area and summarised at appendix 2. The work gives confidence around the impact of the proposals, with residual capacity identified in other local parking facilities. The estimated revenue loss is calculated taking into account the potential displacement of car parking to alternative facilities including other Council car parks, modal shift, and new parking prices.

19. Car parking prices in the city have also recently increased, and it is predicted that this will see a general reduction in city centre car park demand and usage, with users opting for more sustainable/cheaper modes, such as park and ride, cycling or walking. These alternative measures link into the longer-term ambition of the Council to reduce traffic within the city centre as set out in the Local Transport Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and which will also be progressed through the Transport Movement and Place plan. Options to use park and ride services for overnight stays are in the process of being explored through the Bus Service Improvement Plan, and these will offer residents and visitors a more cost effective and sustainable way of staying in the city without the need to park within the city centre – another option that currently doesn't exist, and a way of accommodating displaced demand from Castle Carpark.
20. The tables below illustrate the existing number of parking spaces within the Castle Gateway car parks. It includes the proposed number of car parking spaces following the closure of the Castle Car Park in accordance with the decision at the November 2023 Executive.

<b>Existing Parking Provision</b>				
<b>Car Park</b>	<b>Standard Spaces</b>	<b>Blue Badge Spaces</b>	<b>Electric spaces</b>	<b>Total</b>
Coppergate	248	28*	0	276
St Georges Field	260	6	0	266
Castle car park	268	30	0	298
<b>Total</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>64*</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>840</b>

<b>Proposed Parking Provision</b>				
<b>Car Park</b>	<b>Standard Spaces</b>	<b>Blue Badge Spaces</b>	<b>Electric spaces</b>	<b>Total</b>
Coppergate	248	28*	0	276

St Georges Field	260	6	0	266
Castle car park	0	30	3	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>64*</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>575</b>

\* Including 10 shopmobility

21. The closure of Castle car park would lead to a loss of 265 parking spaces within the Castle Gateway Scheme. Through analysis of parking data there is the potential to accommodate much of this within the Coppergate car park which runs below occupancy for the majority of the year. To optimise use of this residual capacity, a variety of measures are proposed to be employed, including measures to allow 24hr parking, better signage to the car parks, extended opening hours and cosmetic improvements. The works to the Coppergate car park are estimated to cost £200k.
22. Concerns have previously been raised around the potential impact of loss of Castle car park on City Centre businesses. Given the evidence above and in appendix 2, and the additional works proposed - including to Coppergate Carpark, and overnight Park & Ride services, it is considered that impacts on footfall and businesses are capable of being adequately mitigated. In addition, options to improve the quality and capacity of Surface Carparking at St Georges Field are currently being explored and will form part of the forthcoming Movement and Place Strategy, which will consider works in a strategic city wide context, and as part of a joined up approach to strategic transport across all modes.
23. As already noted, and summarised in appendix 2, any alternative decision to retain Castle Carpark would also result in a need for significant capital investment of upwards of £750k due to its poor condition alongside a significant reduction in car parking spaces to ensure that the new layout meets current carparking standards.

## Consultation

24. The Castle Gateway Masterplan has been shaped through extensive stakeholder and public engagement on both the masterplan and subsequent sub-projects in the form of My Castle Gateway. Over 8,500 comments have been recorded to date.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/149815510@N05/tags>

25. The last intensive period of engagement related to the proposed revised concepts designs for the public realm space at Castle and the Eye of York. This ran over summer 2024 and included a programme of activities to help inform the final revised design which was submitted to planning on the 4 July 2025. Full details are set out in the Statement of Community Involvement which accompanies the planning application.
26. The redesign of the space has drawn on the wealth of engagement that already exists and the latest engagement. The Council remain committed to ongoing consultation on the Castle Gateway project.

## Options

27. **Option 1 - Castle & Eye of York Scheme Delivery** – is to approve the recommendations in the report which clearly set out the next steps for the timely delivery of the Castle & Eye of York proposal
28. **Option 2 – Castle Gateway Delivery** - to undertake more comprehensive delivery across a wider portion of the Castle Gateway Masterplan area, or a less light touch treatment of the Castle & Eye of York area. This would increase capital cost, requiring additional borrowing or the seeking of additional external grant funding (source not currently clear), also delaying the scheme and introducing inflationary pressure.
29. **Option 3 – Retain Castle car park** - do not approve the closure of Castle car park due to revenue loss for now, therefore halting the delivery of the Castle & Eye of York scheme and wider masterplan. It should be noted that this would need to include a cost of £750k to resurface the castle car park to current standards and would result in a loss of a significant proportion of spaces with commensurate impact on revenue from this car park.

## Analysis

30. **Option 1** offers a clear way forward following the most recent decisions at the Executive in November 2023, reflects the Council Plan and Our City Centre Vision; as well as responding to the reality that there is significantly less funding available to deliver the Castle Gateway projects. The recommendations allow the regeneration of the area to progress, see the projects aligning to reflect the Council Plan and deliver the centre of the masterplan at a more affordable cost.

Unlocking the regeneration of the Castle Gateway has always presented significant challenges to overcome. The previously agreed delivery approach which breaks the inter dependencies between the Schemes and through careful redesigns, reduces capital costs to secure early delivery has been progressed and can be achieved. Clearly the loss of car parking and its revenue needs to be carefully considered, whilst considering the wider benefits of regenerating the Castle gateway, potential mitigations, and other aims and ambitions of the city as set out in the Local Transport Plan.

31. **Option 2** incurs additional expenditure and delay, with no clear route to delivery at this point in time, and risks jeopardising the near-term realisation of tangible scheme benefits and transformation which are achievable in option 1
32. **Option 3** undermines our strategic approach to transforming this area of the city to benefit residents and make best use of its prime location for the benefit of all. The area would still require significant capital investment, and our strategic transport objectives would be undermined through the promotion of unsustainable modes. Significant levels of external grant funding would also need to be handed back. The Council's revenue position would however be protected.

## Council Plan

33. The Castle Gateway and EoY project will contribute to the delivery of the four core 'EACH' commitments in the Council Plan 2023-27 – One City, for all by:
  1. **Equalities and Human Rights** – by re-purposing the Castle car park and redesigning the proposals, blue badge parking will be retained close to the city to aid accessibility, also aligning with the emerging Local Transport Strategy's Policy Focus Area 1 - shaping a city centre that is accessible for all.
  2. **Affordability** – Creating high quality and free to access amenity and play space in a highly accessible location for residents.
  3. **Climate & Environment** - Providing a new green space within the city centre will help enhance biodiversity, also aiding urban cooling for climate resilience. Detailed Ecological, Green and Blue infrastructure technical work has shaped the development of the planning proposal. The scheme will also support active and

sustainable travel through provision of high quality connectivity and public realm infrastructure. The public realm improvements will consider climate adaptions features for example passive shading/cooling, rest areas and water refill stations.

4. **Health and Wellbeing** – by creating a free amenity and play space for families to encourage healthier lifestyles, coupled with improved connectivity and travel opportunities across the Delivering York Station Gateway and the Outer Ring Road are key actions within the Council Plan 2023-2027. Both schemes contribute to the council plan vision and will establish the conditions that would make York a healthier, fairer, more affordable, more sustainable and more accessible place, creating more regional opportunities to help today's residents and benefit future generations. The connection of rail and outer ring road to the region will enable economic growth aligned to the emerging MCA Local Growth Plan.

34. The proposals will also contribute to the delivery of the 'Our City Centre' vision (in particular themes 1 – family friendly and affordable city centre, 2 – attractive, active and healthy centre, and 4 embracing our riversides), the Local Plan (Policy SS5 – Cattle Gateway), and the Economy, Health & Wellbeing, and Climate Change 10-year strategies.

## Organisational Impact and Implications

### Financial

35. Current spend on Castle and Eye of York to 31.03.2025 is £1.55m, with the cost of further work from 01.04.2025 estimated to be £9.934m, detail shown below.

<b>Estimated spend from 01.04.2025</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Cost Plan	7,234
Estimated Inflation, based on June 2026 start date (*)	400
Design, delivery and project management costs	1,200
Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (range £400k-£900k)	900
Works to Coppergate Car Park	200

TOTAL estimated spend from 01.04.2025	9,934
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(\*) This start date is subject to consent and procurement approval

36. The recommendations to executive are to use Current Funding available for the project as follows

<b>Available Funds from 01.04.2025</b>	<b>£'000</b>
WYCA grant (**)	4,523
CYC approvals	3,911
TOTAL funding available from 01.04.2025	8,434
Shortfall in Funding	1,500

37. There is currently no external source for the funding shortfall. It will be necessary to identify the schemes in the Capital programme that will be de-prioritised to transfer funding to the Castle Gateway scheme This will need approval by Executive
38. (\*\*) WYCA will need to give confirmation that the use of their £4.523m budget is eligible, i.e. covers only transport costs. Discussions with WYCA are currently taking place to confirm the extent of transport costs included the Castle and Eye of York project. Use of the WYCA funding may be subject to the opportunity to swap up to £3.474m of approved CYC funding from the YORR project with this WYCA transport funding, see below

	<b>£'000</b>
WYCA Funding identified for Castle Gateway projects	4,523
CYC approved YORR Funding	3,474
Minimum Transport related spend on Castle and Eye of York project	1,049



39. Car Parking Revenue. The decision to confirm the re-purposing of Castle car park will have the impact of reducing car parking income across the council estate. In 2024/25 £1.8m was generated at the car park and c £2m is forecast in 2025/26. There is significant capacity across neighbouring car parks (notably Coppergate and St George's Field) which would allow the majority of car park users to relocate to other council car parks. There are relatively few days (Saturdays and some school holiday / event days) where there would not be surplus spaces. Further analysis would be required to be undertaken once the impact of increased prices have been modelled through the year as there are fewer transactions and therefore increased capacity. However whilst the council does have capacity to accept dispersed parking there is no guarantee that drivers will move to other CYC car parks as opposed to private sector car parks.
40. If Executive do agree to the closure of Castle car Park, this decision will need to be reflected in the budget approval process and the income expectation will need to be reduced accordingly. Prior to further analysis it is recommended that the impact should be assumed for the purposes of budget setting at £500k ie 25% of revenue lost to the council. There are opportunities to minimise this income loss as set out in the report, and the assessment of £90k loss is noted in Appendix 2. It is currently assumed that impacts would be felt from financial year 2027/28.

### **Human Resources (HR)**

41. There are no HR implications contained within this report.

### **Legal**

42. In implementing the proposed Castle car park and Eye of York scheme, along with the proposed improvements to Coppergate car park, any proposed works and services, including those funded by the grant funding identified in this report, will need to be commissioned via a compliant procurement process under the Procurement Act 2023 and the council's Contract Procedure Rules. Any associated contracts will need to ensure that relevant terms and conditions under the Grant Agreement with WYCA are passed on accordingly

43. Regarding the closure of Castle car park, pursuant to sections 35 and 46A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA) 1984, the Council has statutory powers to charge for off-street parking places. The proposed car park closure will necessitate a change to the Off Street Parking Order. In accordance with the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 the Council is required to publish a notice of variation setting out the changes in a local newspaper for 21 days. The notice of variation is also required to be placed in prominent positions in the carpark until the new charges come into force. Subject to no objections being received, the car park closure will be reflected in the Off-Street Parking Order by way of formal variation.

## **Procurement**

44. Procurement will be a main tool used to deliver the priorities and projects set out within this report. All works and/or services must be procured via a compliant, open, transparent, and fair process in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Procurement Act 2023. Creative and innovative ways of procuring will be explored to ensure elements of the council plan are captured within the procurements and to maximise social value and maximise public benefit. Further advice regarding the procurement process and development of additional procurement strategies must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

45. These proposals align with a number of separate public health goals, outlined in the Council Plan 2023-7 and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-32. These include the aspirations to increase physical activity by enabling active transport routes, reduce car dependency and encourage walking, cycling and wheeling; improve air quality through similar means, invest in quality of life for children and young people by including green space and play areas, and improve mental health and wellbeing through access to green space.
46. The detailed design of this space will benefit from reflecting principles in the emerging Healthy Spaces Supplementary Planning Document, for instance considering healthy streets principles which enhance liveability, such as shade and shelter, providing things to see and do, incorporating places to stop and rest, reducing noise, prioritising public safety particularly for women and girls, and with safe places to cross.

47. The ongoing management of the area as a public space would benefit from considering further public health gains the scheme could achieve by reducing the impact of the three biggest public health harms – tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy food. This might include designating the space ‘smokefree’, considering the suitability of alcohol sales especially in areas where children and young people will be, and taking measures to ensure the food environment is free from junk food marketing and enables people to access healthy food options

### **Environment and Climate action**

48. The proposals set out within this Report are in line with the Council’s Plans and support the Climate Change Strategy 2022- 2032. York’s Climate Change Strategy identifies that 28% of emissions are from transport and that we should be seeking to reduce overall travel miles and increase uptake of active travel and public transport. The detailed Ecological Green and Blue infrastructure technical work which shaped the development of the proposal demonstrates the alignment with the transport objectives of the Local Transport Strategy approved at Executive in October in that the proposals support an inclusive, accessible, affordable and sustainable city, to contribute to both the Climate Change Strategy and the Economic Growth Strategy, improve health and wellbeing through healthy place shaping, improve the local environment by reducing air pollution and noise and protect the city’s heritage and enhance public spaces.

### **Affordability**

49. York Station Gateway will attract tourism, potentially grow and maintain new and existing businesses and support the creation of new jobs.

### **Equalities and Human Rights**

50. A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and can be found at Appendix 3. It highlights the need for ongoing dialogue with groups who may be impacted by the schemes and there have already been some changes made to designs as a result of this engagement taking place.

### **Data Protection and Privacy**

51. 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, following the approved recommendations and options from this report, a DPIA will be completed.

### **Communications**

52. The communications team works closely with colleagues around the Castle Gateway project. This has involved supporting the engagement work and any project updates. Progressing the Castle Gateway Scheme will need continued communications support to deliver a comprehensive strategy covering before, during and after any potential construction work. Should Castle car park close, as well as project updates significant work will be required to forewarn people and to highlight alternative travel options to York city centre, including promoting sustainable travel and alternative car parking options.

### **Economy**

53. York city centre is home to around a quarter of York's businesses and is a key attractor of inward investment and business growth. The measures set out in this report support the delivery of the York Economic Strategy 2022-2032 and the involvement of the York Economic Partnership in shaping future delivery of the Our City Centre Vision will ensure continued close alignment with city and business priorities.

### **Crime and Disorder**

54. The Planning permission will be followed to ensure that all secure by Design elements are implemented.

### **Property**

55. The City Council holds a long lease of the Coppergate Centre car park and proposed improvement works would be carried out in consultation with the landlord of the facility.

### **Risk Management**

56. The principal risks associated with the Castle and Eye of York project at this stage are cost and contract management, reputational, non-delivery, and loss of revenue related. The phasing of the project in the manner proposed in this report is in direct response to some of these risks, so that the regeneration of this area can progress and is not further stalled.

57. The risks associated with cost and contract management are potentially significant but are mitigated and managed by the extensive cost planning work undertaken to date with professional consultants, by appropriate staffing and resourcing of the project - as proposed in the budget allocations, and through the undertaking of thorough Pre Market Engagement as part of procurement processes. Whilst it is not the outcome wanted, if costs are too much and cannot be valued engineered to get a scheme that will deliver the outcomes proposed, the final option will be to not deliver the scheme.
58. There is a risk that having engaged extensively and raised expectations amongst the public, the change of approach will not fully deliver initial expectations. However, the bigger risk to the city is not to delivery anything and see the regeneration of the area continue to stall.
59. There is a risk that loss of council revenue or impacts on local businesses will be more substantial than forecast, however a package of mitigation is proposed in this respect, and technical analysis reveals that the risks are low.

## **Recommendations**

60. Scrutiny are asked to consider the recommendations to the Executive, which are as follows:
  - i. Note the evolution from the original masterplan scheme to the proposed scheme as summarised in Appendix 1, and the progress to date around planning submission and scheme development.
  - ii. Approve the total project funding package of up to £9.934m, to deliver the Castle & EoY and Coppergate car park works, comprised principally of WYCA and Council funding, and including the reprioritisation of up to £0.75m per annum over the project delivery period from within the general transport Capital Programme, in order to manage cost pressures.
  - iii. Approve the improvements to be made to Coppergate car park to ensure that it is a 24-hour self-servicing car park at an estimated cost of £200k (from the £9.934m).
  - iv. Approve the procurement of contractors and specialist support services to enable timely completion of the scheme

(pending Planning ref 22/00209/FULM with further details submitted on the 4 July).

- v. Delegate authority to the Director of City Development, in consultation with the Director of Governance, Head of Procurement and the Director of Finance, to procure such contractors and/or consultants and to take such steps as are necessary to award and enter into the resulting contracts (including any and all planning agreements and/or highways/land agreements as required; (however for the sake of clarity this delegation is not for any requirements of either the Local Planning and/or Highways Authority). The delegations given in this recommendation must be exercised within the budgets approved within this report.
- vi. Agree the permanent closure of Castle car park to non-blue badge parking, from Spring 2026 (incurring loss of revenue to the Council), and approve the associated package of mitigation (to include works to Coppergate Carpark and exploring potential future works to St Georges Field Surface Carpark- to be considered as part of the wider Movement & Place workstream). To note that during the construction period the car park will be closed to all users, including blue badge holders.

Reason:

To allow the progression of the Castle & Eye scheme to delivery phases to realise key city benefits, with mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate management of budget and project risk profile, and to do so in a manner which mitigates any potential adverse impacts on Council revenue, transport network and local businesses.

## Contact Details

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 19.09.25

**Wards Affected:**

**All** ☒

**For further information please contact the author of the report.**

## Background papers

Report to the Executive, Castle Gateway November 2023

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=13932&Ver=4>

Report to the Executive, 'York's Southern Gateway,' October 2015

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=>

Report to the Executive, 'York Castle Gateway,' January 2017

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=9309>

Report to the Executive, 'The Castle Gateway Masterplan,' April 2018

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=10197&Ver=4>

Report to the Executive, 'Castle Gateway phase one delivery strategy,'  
January 2020

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=11115&Ver=4>

Report to the Executive, 'Update on Castle Gateway and Business Case  
Review,' October 2020

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=12297&Ver=4>

Report to the Executive 'Castle Gateway Update' June 2022

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=13287&Ver=4>

## Appendices

Appendix 1	Scheme Development 2022-25
Appendix 2	Castle Gateway Parking Options
Appendix 3	Equalities Impact Assessment



# APPENDIX 1

## Scheme development 2022 - 2025

- Water fountains replaced by play area
- Paved events space replaced by green park and blue badge parking
- Boardwalk behind museum replaced with a future aspiration to connect to Castle Mills
- Simpler scheme reduces overall costs

2022 Scheme



2025 Scheme



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## APPENDIX 2



### **Castle Gateway Parking Options**

#### **Introduction**

This note discusses key parking decisions linked with the Castle Gateway project. Within the local area there are three council owned and controlled car parks – Castle Car Park, St George’s Field and the Coppergate Centre also known as Piccadilly, there are a further two privately operated car parks serving this area of the city – Shambles Q Park and Peel Street. The paper considers two scenario’s in relation to Council assets, and explores the implications, parking demand and capacity issues flowing from these, including in the context of broader pricing changes. These scenarios are:

- Option 1 - where Castle Car Park is retained
- Option 2 - where Castle car park is closed and repurposed, and wider assets upgraded

#### **Supply: Current Situation and Options**

There are three principal car parks in the southeast quadrant of York city centre, these being Castle car park, St George’s Field and Coppergate Centre. Between them they have 776 standard, 64 blue badge and 27 coach spaces, as follows:

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Car spaces</b>	<b>Blue badge spaces</b>	<b>Coach spaces</b>	<b>Total</b>
Castle Car Park	268	30	0	298
St Georges Field	260	6	27	293
Coppergate Centre	248	28	0	276

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>867</b>
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In **Option 1** Castle Car Park is retained, though it is important to note that even in this scenario there are maintenance and operational issues affecting the car park's capacity and incurring capital expenditure. Castle Car Park now suffers from a severely dilapidated surface and has very narrow turning aisles. If it is retained it would need to be resurfaced and relined as the spaces are not standard at present. In this option there is an assumption that if the car park is retained that these failings are addressed. This necessary works would result in the following:

- Removal of one double row of parking spaces (60 spaces) to widen the turning aisles. Under this option the number of parking spaces available at Castle Car Park would fall from 298 spaces to 238 spaces.
- An assumed central cost for resurfacing, relining and upgrading the car park to best practice standards of approximately **£750k**. This would have to be funded from the existing parking maintenance budget.

The resultant supply position is summarised below:

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Car spaces</b>	<b>Blue badge spaces</b>	<b>Coach spaces</b>	<b>Total</b>
Castle Car Park	208	30	0	298
St Georges Field	260	6	27	293
Coppergate Centre	248	28	0	276
<b>TOTAL (option 1)</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>807</b>

In **Option 2**, the non-blue badge spaces on Castle Car Park are closed and repurposed – with just the 30 existing blue badge spaces retained (although relocated elsewhere within the car park). Consequently, parking availability would be:

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Car spaces</b>	<b>Blue badge spaces</b>	<b>Coach spaces</b>	<b>Total</b>
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Castle Car Park	0	30	0	30
St Georges Field	260	6	27	293
Coppergate Centre	248	28	0	276
<b>TOTAL (option 2)</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>599</b>

Although not directly considered in this paper, there is potential for capacity to be increased somewhat on the St Georges Field surface car park. This will be considered as part of the forthcoming Movement & Place study, in order to ensure a coordinated city-wide approach.

Previous work has indicated a potential for accommodating an additional 37 spaces through relatively straightforward works including relining and looking at how coach movements are managed in the city. Given the relatively minor impact of these changes, and their interdependency with wider Movement & Place matters including coach parking, this uplift has not been carried forward as part of this assessment, though is useful to note.

### **Demand: Current Situation**

It is not currently possible to extract direct data on demand levels from the council's parking management information. However, assessments of parking activity in the car parks have been prepared on the basis of a count undertaken during a site visit (in January 2025). January is, of course, a relatively quiet time for parking activity in York, and an accepted grossing methodology using bus ticket sales at the park and ride sites as a proxy has been adopted to derive average and peak month occupancy from this. Based on this methodology, January represents 68% of "average" month activity, and only just above half of peak month activity. This data results in the following observed and derived demand levels across the three assets:

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Spaces available (inc blue badge)</b>	<b>Observed occupancy (Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2:30PM<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>Average month occupancy</b>	<b>Peak month (Aug/ Dec) occupancy</b>
Castle	298	c164 (55%)	240	329

SGF	266	c67 (25%)	97	133
Coppergate	274	c97 (35%)	141	194
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>c327 (39%)</b>	<b>478 (57%)</b>	<b>656 (78%)</b>

To allow a more nuanced understanding of average and peak month occupancy, footfall data and parking transaction information were also analysed as proxies. These datasets revealed figures of 67% average month/ 81% peak month combined car park occupancy based on footfall, and 52% average month / 62% peak month occupancy based on transactions (both against 57% and 78% for park and ride data per the table above). It should be noted though that footfall data will not be a wholly comparable proxy, reflecting whole demand by all modes and for city residents also. The average of all three proxies is 57% average month and 71% peak month.

The data highlights a series of important points - if parking activity is assessed across the three existing council car parks (and not including further privately operated assets in the local area), these calculations would suggest:

- Even in the peak month, average occupancy at 78%<sup>2</sup> is some way below a theoretical 90%<sup>3</sup> design capacity if considered across all three car parks.
- In the peak month there is excess demand at Castle. Applying the “90% rule” suggests that around 60 drivers arriving at Castle car park in the peak 2 hour period would need to find a space elsewhere (assumed here to be at SGF or Coppergate – although in practice other parking is available at Peel Street, various on-street locations etc). This could be a source of parking search congestion, especially if, as now, the real time parking guidance system is inoperative. However, across just these three car parks, adequate space is available to accommodate this demand.
- In the “average” month (say a Wednesday in October or March) all the car parks can accommodate demands made on them. Even the busiest, Castle, would be only about 80% occupied on this “average” day, and across all three car parks 43% (362) spaces are unoccupied.

- Discussion with Parking Services suggests there are about 20 “really busy” days a year when all the city centre parking space in York is used. These are generally weekends in late November and December when the Christmas markets are operating. These 20 days place exceptional demands on York’s parking. Analysis of car park transaction data reveals that there are theoretically 105 days where demand exceeds capacity across the retained Council car parks in option 2, though forecast demand modelling taking into account the impact of the price changes (see section below) reduces this to just 8 days by year 3.
- All of these observations are predicated on the static and maintained current demand for parking, whereas policy interventions will impact this moving forward.

There is an implication of this analysis: although the car parks are well used in the peak month, for much of the year there is significant parking overcapacity in the south-eastern quadrant of York city centre, even when looking just at these three core Council assets. In an average day in an average month, the number of unoccupied spaces across all three car parks (362) exceeds the total number of spaces in Castle car park (currently 298, reducing to 238 in Option 1 and 30 blue badge spaces that would be retained in Option 2). Derived demand data also reveals that there are significantly more months each year (9) when use is at or below average levels, than there are when use exceeds average levels (there are 3 – August, November and December). Existing levels of peak month demand exceed combined capacity under option 2 (removal of castle car park) by 57 spaces – this is before looking at broader capacity of non-council parking assets and on street parking, or future demand levels impacted by policy decisions.

Obviously, the question of the extent to which CYC makes city centre space available to cater for the visitor parking peak in York is one for Members to consider – but it is reasonable to ask, in a location like Castle car park where parking space is being provided at the opportunity cost of other, potentially very high amenity uses, whether parking capacity which is only required because it is in excess of space available in other car parks in the immediate area in three months each year, is a justifiable use of that space.

### **Demand: Forecast Situation (impact of price changes)**

The analysis so far does not consider the impact of the changes to parking charges which now form a commitment in CYC's budget for 2025/6. On 21<sup>st</sup> January CYC's Executive committed to increase off street parking prices in York by approximately 56%, with a two hour stay increasing in price from £6.20 to £9.70.

Evidence base suggests that non-commuter demand for parking falls in relation to price increases with an elasticity of -0.63<sup>4</sup>. It would be reasonable to expect that this reduction would play out over a three-year period. If a linear response is assumed, then parking demand would fall by approximately 12%<sup>5</sup> each year. This implies the following reductions in parking demand:

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Current av/ peak month</b>	<b>Yr 1 av/ peak month</b>	<b>Yr 2 av/ peak month</b>	<b>Yr 3 av/ peak month</b>
Castle	240/329	211/290	183/251	154/212
SGF	97/133	86/118	74/102	63/86
Coppergate	141/194	124/171	108/148	91/125
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>478/656</b>	<b>421/578</b>	<b>365/500</b>	<b>308/422</b>

In Option 2, where Castle car park is repurposed (at the end of year one), there would be 599 spaces available across the three car parks – implying a real world (90%) space supply of 539. The calculation above suggests:

- With Castle car park repurposed, this capacity is adequate for the current “average month” (indeed this is the case with now – without the price increase applied)
- In Year One of the price change Castle car park is still open during the peak months (August and December), so capacity exists to accommodate the forecast parking demand in that year. If it is closed in January 2026, then space in SGF and Piccadilly is adequate to cater for forecast levels of demand at the end of year one (and anyway, at the end of year One demand would slowly be falling towards Year 2 levels)
- In years 2 and 3 the reduced capacity is able to accommodate peak month demand levels – assuming the elastic response to the price change is in line with evidence base.



Again, this analysis is constrained to the three council operated assets in this part of the city, not taking into account residual capacity in on-street and non Council operated assets, or the impacts of extended Park & Ride operating hours and overnight parking provision. For information, the table below summarises the current car park costs for CYC and the 2 nearby private car parks:

	1 hr	2 hr	3 hr	4 hr	5 hr	6 hr	Overnight 6pm to 8am	All Day
<b>Coppergate</b>								
Sun - Thurs	£4.85	£9.7	£11.2	£14.9	£18.6	£22.3	£4	
Sun - Thurs (Minster Badge)	£3.4	£6.8	£7.8	£10.4	£13	£15.	£2	
Fri, Sat & events	£5.3	£10.6	£13.5	£17.5	£21.5	£25.5	£4.8	
Fri, Sat & events (Minster Badge)	£3.7	£7.4	£9.5	£12.3	£15.1	£17.9	£2	
<b>St George's Field</b>								
Sun - Thurs	£4.85	£9.7	£11.2	£14.9	£18.6	£22.3	£4	£22.5
Sun - Thurs (Minster Badge)	£3.4	£6.8	£7.8	£10.4	£13.0	£15.6	£2	£15.8
Fri, Sat & events	£5.3	£10.6	£13.5	£17.5	£21.5	£25.5	£4.8	£25
Fri, Sat & events (Minster Badge)	£3.7	£7.4	£9.5	£12.3	£15.1	£17.9	£2	£17.5
<b>Peel Street Car Park (78 spaces)</b>								
	£3	£5	£7.5		£9			£16
<b>Q Park Shambles (248 spaces)</b>								
Entry from 00:00 to 06:59	£2							£25
y from 07:00 to 09:59	£3							£25
Entry from 10:00 to 14:59	£4							£25
Entry from 15:00 to 17:59	£3.5							£25
Entry from 18:00 to 23:59	£3							£25

Blue Badge holders can park in any of CYC car parks free of charge (within opening hours) in either a disabled or standard bay, and they can also park on single yellow lines or double yellow lines, for a maximum of 3 hours.

## Revenue Impacts

For **Option One**, with the parking price increase, it is assumed that space is available to accommodate parking demand on the average day in all months. On the basis that there are 20 exceptional days a year when all parking is full, then there would be a loss of approximately £23,000 pa<sup>6</sup> - although this is possibly an overestimate because, with higher prices, there would be an impact on parking demand even on the “exceptional” days.

For **Option Two**, although capacity is generally able to accommodate demand after the price changes, there are a number of additional effects:

- On 11 days a year<sup>7</sup> St George’s Field is flooded – there is a loss of revenue from this because, under Option 2, a greater proportion of the parking space in the south eastern quadrant of York City Centre is in St George’s Field and the Council is therefore more exposed to the revenue effect of the loss of this space
- There are operating cost savings from ceasing to operate Castle Car Park – i.e. need to patrol it, maintenance costs, repairs and replacements
- There is potential for new income to CYC from the new green space created by closing Castle Car Park

An attempt has not been made to calculate changes in operating cost/ income from new uses, but in terms of parking revenue, it would appear that:

- On the 20 really busy days a year (e.g. December weekends) it would continue to be possible to fill all the parking space available across all three car parks for the four hours in the

middle of the day (11AM-3PM). Loss is consequently 4 hours (£19.40) parking for 230 spaces for 20 days = £89,240.

- We could also assume that there is a revenue loss on the days that St George's Field is flooded because of the loss of overall capacity in the area. Assuming average month occupancy levels on the 11 days effected suggests loss of approx. 4 hours parking on 115 spaces (yr 1 demand = 421 parking acts – with SGF flooded there are 306 spaces available) = £24,541 in Year 1 – falling to effectively zero in Year 3 as demand falls in response to the price increase.
- Total = approx. £115,000 pa (falling to £92,000 if assessed against Option 1).

## **Conclusions and Next Steps**

The above calculations have been made using base information and grossing techniques. They represent a reasonable attempt to assess demand on the basis of both limited demand information and limited time available to interpret it. Parking Services indicate that the occupancy levels used in the forecasts fit broadly with their experience of the car parks in use.

Nonetheless, the conclusion of this analysis should be that, **once the committed price uplift is applied, parking demand in the south-eastern sector of York can broadly be accommodated in the available capacity across Council car parks, even on an average day of the peak month once Castle car park is repurposed.** As set out above, this does not mean that space will always be available – some days will be exceptionally busy (see footnote 2) – and floods which affect St George's Field will reduce supply in this area of the city by approximately 50% - so there is a resilience implication and some loss of revenue from that. However, in general, the analysis would suggest that the available car parking supply in option 2 is adequate in all but exceptional circumstances, even before residual capacity in non-Council operated assets is factored.

Modelled revenue implications of the proposed Option 2 appears to be a loss of around £90,000 pa against a plausible alternative (Option 1).

In order to minimise revenue losses to the authority and displacement of parking to more peripheral locations from the Centre, ways to increase the usage of Coppergate by improving it's attractiveness and ease of access to drivers should be explored. A longlist of potential options are set out below, informed by discussions with the CYC manager of car parking, retail operators, and a site visit. The timing of these works in relation to the closure of Castle Carpark under option 2 would need to be carefully managed, and key elements expedited to minimise disruption to traffic flow and establish behavioural patterns at a formative stage.

- Works to make the facility accessible over 24 hours
- There is an existing electronic parking space occupancy screen for 'Picadilly' on Tower Street, an additional screen could be provided close to the entrance to the carpark and potentially also at other key locations on the access routes so drivers could deviate to alternative parking as required. Consideration could also be given to the reinstatement of the parking guidance

system to manage parking search congestion, though this is a broader city wide intervention. .

- Additional physical signage directing drivers to the car park from suitable and sufficient routes into the city centre, along with additional signage for pedestrians returning to their cars.
- Review and improvement to the entrance of the car park to make it easier for vehicles to enter and leave the carpark and safety of pedestrians crossing.
  - a. On a visit it was noted cars entering the carpark were significantly slowing to manage the turn from what looks to be a narrow filter lane.
  - b. Retailers have raised also the difficulty for drivers navigating the entrance.
  - c. these works may be deliverable as part of wider planned works to Picadilly.
- Review of entrance signage, in case potential to improve visibility and/or desirability to drivers.
- Internal review
  - a. Car bay layout – it could be considered to review the layout and size of spaces, with consideration to improve attractiveness and accessibility.
  - b. Decoration – review of refreshing any painted areas and colours could be allocated to each level to assist drivers remembering what floor they have parked on.
  - c. Lighting – review whether any lights need maintenance etc to ensure the required lux levels are being provided.
  - d. Security review – part of the work to enable the carpark to be operational 24 hours.

It is also understood as well that NEXT will be opening in November 2025 in the vacant unit with frontage adjacent to the car park entrance, which will be a positive impact visually.

#### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Although the occupancy surveys reported here are very crude, discussion with Parking Services suggested that observed use levels were in line with their experience – particularly that there was usually some space availability even in the peak months. Discussions suggested there were perhaps 20 days a year when the capacity of all three car parks was exceeded and there was significant park search congestion in the south east quadrant of York.

<sup>2</sup> This is for an “average” day in the peak month. Consequently it is not to say that there will not be individual very busy days (e.g. Saturdays before Christmas, August bank holiday) when capacity is exceeded – but on average it is not, even at peak occupancy time (assessed as being between 11AM and 3PM).

<sup>3</sup> Parking design standards suggest spaces provided should assume a peak practical occupancy of 90% as “full” to allow for imperfections such as lack of knowledge about available spaces, large or badly parked vehicles occupying more than one space, people entering and leaving etc. Arguably, even 90% is too high for Castle Car Park because the narrow turning aisles and small spaces mean some spaces cannot, in practice, be accessed when it is busy.

<sup>4</sup> The price elasticity of parking: a meta-analysis (Lehner/ Peer) Transportation Research March 2019. In practice people will react to the price change in different ways – for example, shifting parking activity to other car parks in York, changing mode of transport, visiting York less often or for shorter periods, visiting other destinations etc. In the longer term there would be more subtle attitudinal changes (e.g. falling car ownership)

<sup>5</sup>  $((-0.63 * 56\%)/3) = -0.12$

<sup>6</sup> hours parking lost across 60 spaces on 20 days a year.

<sup>7</sup> Average over last 10 years

## APPENDIX 3

**City of York Council**  
**Equalities Impact Assessment**

**Who is submitting the proposal?**

<b>Directorate:</b>	City Development
<b>Service Area:</b>	City Development
<b>Name of the proposal:</b>	Major Projects - Castle Gateway
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Garry Taylor – Director of City Development
<b>Date assessment completed:</b>	16/07/2025 Date amended following comments 11/09/2025

<b>Names of those who contributed to the assessment:</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Job title</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Area of expertise</b>
Patricia Salami	Interim Head of Regeneration	CYC	Capital Programme Management / Delivery
Ben Murphy	Head of City Development	CYC	Capital Programme Management
Laura Williams	Assistant Director Customer, Communities and Inclusion	CYC	Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
David Smith	Access officer	CYC	Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Team



## Step 1 – Aims and intended outcomes

1.1	<b>What is the purpose of the proposal?</b> Please explain your proposal in Plain English avoiding acronyms and jargon.
	<p>This assessment covers a major strategic project called the Castle Gateway scheme which aims to provide the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A flexible green space which includes children's play provision, which will be accessible play equipment</li><li>• Retain the 30 blue badge parking spaces on Castle Car Park, but in a different location on the site,</li><li>• Reducing capital and management costs for the life of the project. By introducing low maintenance projects.</li><li>• The revised brief, along with the high-level optioneering designs were tested with key members, key stakeholders and the public between May and September 2024.</li><li>• The public realm improvements will consider climate adaptations features for example passive shading/cooling, rest areas, water refill stations. It will also aid sustainable transport modes. enhance accessibility, improve active travel options, create a high-quality public realm, and support regeneration.</li><li>• The scheme will also improve health and wellbeing by creating a free amenity and play space for families to encourage healthier lifestyles, coupled with improved connectivity and travel opportunities across the site.</li><li>• Improving walking and cycling routes will contribute to active travel and help improve air quality</li></ul>

<b>1.2</b>	<b>Are there any external considerations?</b> (Legislation/government directive/codes of practice etc.)
	Yes. The scheme is subject to a statutory planning application submitted on the 4 <sup>th</sup> July 2025, funding conditions from the <b>West Yorkshire Combined Authority</b> and must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and human rights legislation. Public sector equality duties and environmental regulations also apply.

<b>1.3</b>	<b>Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests?</b>
	Stakeholders include residents, commuters, businesses in the area, interest groups such as the Castle Gateway Advisory Group, York Access Forum (YAF). planning authority, and funding bodies. Their interests range from improved connectivity and safety to economic growth, heritage preservation, and equitable access.
<b>1.4</b>	<b>What results/outcomes do we want to achieve and for whom?</b> 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>In the Local Plan, <b>Policy SS5 – Castle Gateway</b> is allocated as an “Area of Opportunity.” It is identified as a major regeneration area of the city centre. This project is key to delivering this policy. This project will also support the City Centre Accessibility Action Plan.</p> <p>The projects also contribute to deliver of the three (3) 10-year City strategies approved in 2022:</p>

- Economic Strategy (2022-2032).
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2032).
- Climate Change Strategy (2022-2032).

The Castle Gateway scheme will also help deliver the ‘Our City Centre’ Vision, approved by the Executive in October 2023, as set out below:

**Theme 1 – Family friendly and affordable city centre**

- The new public realm around Clifford’s Tower will create valuable new play space in the city centre and create a space that can be used by people of all ages.

**Theme 2 – An attractive, active, and healthy city centre**

- The creation of the new public realm space delivers investment in public space and squares.
- Deliver active travel options for getting into and around the centre of York.

**Theme 3 – A sustainable city fit for the future.**

- New green space will increase biodiversity in the city and improve climate resilience and reduce surface water run-off.

**Theme 4 – Embracing our riversides.**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Castle and Eye of York designs will celebrate the cultural and environmental benefits of the River Foss, providing a new river edge and walkway linking to the new river park behind the museum.</li> </ul> <p><b>Theme 5 – A safe and accessible city centre.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue badge parking will be retained close to the city to aid accessibility.</li> <li>• The new public space at the Castle and Eye of York will provide open space and facilities for residents and will be specifically designed to improve accessibility. This supports the Health and Wellbeing strategy, “Creating an age friendly city for older adults.”</li> </ul> <p><b>Theme 6 – Celebrating heritage and making modern history.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new public realm development in the Castle and Eye of York will enhance the setting of the heritage assets surrounding the spaces by, repurposing the car park, enhancing the Eye of York, and transforming the connectivity to this area.</li> </ul>
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## Step 2 – Gathering the information and feedback

2.1	<p><b>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?</b> 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.</p>
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Source of data/supporting evidence	Reason for using
Public consultations including feedback from My Future York	This obtains opinions of local residents, businesses and visitors
York Access Forum	A wide representation of the disabilities and accessibility.
The Castle Gateway Advisory group (a group of external stakeholders in the city including the Civic Trust, York Museums Trust, York Bid, Make it York, Environment Agency, English Heritage, Historic England, York Crown Court),	To gather a wide range of views from people who live, work, study and visit here, while recognising that this will not cover all views and issues.
The Bid Board, Liberal Jewish Community, the York Access Forum and the owners of the Cooperate Centre, were also consulted.	To gather a wide range of views from people who live, work, study and visit here, while recognising that this will not cover all views and issues.
Reports from Turner & Townsend (cost and impact assessments)	T&T are cost consultants on the scheme and therefore our professional services provider
Council Plan 2023–2027, Health and Wellbeing Strategy	
Climate Change Strategy	

Project planning documents and financial analysis reports	
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### Step 3 – Gaps in data and knowledge

3.1	<b>What are the main gaps in information and understanding of the impact of your proposal? Please indicate how any gaps will be dealt with.</b>	
<b>Gaps in data or knowledge</b>		<b>Action to deal with this</b>
Limited detailed modelling of long-term socioeconomic impacts across diverse communities		Extend stakeholder engagement to include targeted outreach with underrepresented groups

### Step 4 – Analysing the impacts or effects.

4.1	<b>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.</b>
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<b>Equality Groups and Human Rights.</b>	<b>Key Findings/Impacts</b>	<b>Positive (+) Negative (-) Neutral (0)</b>	<b>High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)</b>
<b>Age</b>	Improved active travel infrastructure and safer crossings enhance accessibility for older and younger people. Analysis indicates that parking demand can be accommodated within similarly centrally located existing parking facilities, mitigating any impact on access to shops and services.	+	H
	Newly created green space with play facilities will benefit all	+	H
<b>Disability</b>	Accessible public realm and connectivity improvements will benefit those with mobility impairments. Some design choices (e.g. tactile surfacing, route gradients) initially raised concerns but are now under review after stakeholder input. Reprovision of blue badge parking will safeguard accessible and centrally located facilities, delivering to modern standards and accessible format.	+	H
<b>Gender</b>	Neutral impact expected; project benefits are universally accessible. However, the space should feel safe – especially for women – further monitoring recommended	0	
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	No differential impact identified.	0	

<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	No differential impact identified.	0	
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Improved public realm likely to benefit expectant mothers and those with young children. Parking demand for central shops and services can be accommodated within similarly centrally location alternative existing parking facilities.	+	H
<b>Race</b>	No differential impact identified	0	
<b>Religion and belief</b>	York Castle and the space around it have high cultural significance for religious groups due to historic events associated with it. The proposals have been developed working closely with religious communities of interest, and will incorporate spaces for reflection and interpretive material, improving the setting significantly from its current utilitarian surface car park format.	+	M
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	No differential impact identified.	0	
<b>Other Socio-economic groups including :</b>	<b>Could other socio-economic groups be affected e.g. carers, ex-offenders, low incomes?</b>		
<b>Carer</b>	Improved connectivity, safer crossings and retained blue badge parking benefit carers supporting individuals with mobility issues.	+	M



<b>Low income groups</b>	Improved public realm and improved access supports inclusive access to amenities jobs and services; possible indirect benefit.	+	H
<b>Veterans, Armed Forces Community</b>	Neutral impact; potential for improved access to support services via better connectivity.	0	
<b>Human Rights</b>	The creation of new high quality public realm in a culturally, historically and religiously important space passively supports the right to freedom of assembly.	+	L
<b>Other</b>			
<b>Impact on human rights:</b>			
List any human rights impacted.	As above, low positive impact on right to freedom of assembly.	+	L

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

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## Step 5 - Mitigating adverse impacts and maximising positive impacts

5.1	<p><b>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?</b></p>
<p>Based on the findings from Step 4, several measures are being undertaken to mitigate potential negative impacts and to promote positive outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing engagement with the stakeholder groups (e.g Advisory Group, Liberal Jewish Community etc) to review detailed design elements.</li> <li>- Adjustments to materials and tactile surfacing following feedback from people with visual and mobility impairments.</li> <li>- Prioritising the sequencing of events to avoid disproportionately affecting low-income and carer populations during construction.</li> <li>- Promotion of inclusive employment opportunities tied to the development process and long-term economic benefits.</li> <li>- Incorporating human rights principles into project governance to uphold access, non-discrimination, and community participation.</li> </ul>	

## Step 6 – Recommendations and conclusions of the assessment

6.1	<p>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:</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>No major change to the proposal</b> – 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.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Adjust the proposal</b> – the EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. This involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality or to foster good relations.</li> <li>- <b>Continue with the proposal</b> (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</li> <li>- <b>Stop and remove the proposal</b> – 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.</li> </ul> <p><b>Important:</b> If there are any adverse impacts you cannot mitigate, please provide a compelling reason in the justification column.</p>
Option selected	Conclusions/justification

Adjust the proposal	<p>Whilst the proposals overall have positive impacts, and no negative adverse impacts are identified, there are ongoing opportunities through the design development process to continue to optimise scheme benefits and address any stakeholder concerns, especially regarding accessibility and socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>Justification: The scheme aligns with the Council's strategic goals and demonstrates clear equalities benefits. As the final scheme detail is worked up beyond planning/ RIBA stage 3, design adjustments, consultation, and monitoring can take place to further optimise benefits and forestall any adverse impacts. Therefore, the proposals should continue with modifications and inclusive oversight.</p>
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### Step 7 – Summary of agreed actions resulting from the assessment

<b>7.1</b>	<b>What action, by whom, will be undertaken as a result of the impact assessment.</b>		
<b>Impact/issue</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Accessibility concerns (cycleways, surfacing, signage)	Refine design based on feedback from York Access Forum	Project Design Lead	Accessibility concerns (cycleways, surfacing, signage)
Socio-economic access during construction	Sequence works to avoid disruption to key service routes	Project / Programme Manager –	Socio-economic access during construction

Inclusive consultation	Continue engagement with equality groups and community partners	Community Engagement Officer	Inclusive consultation
Monitoring impacts on protected groups	Establish review checkpoints during delivery phases	Equalities Officer	Monitoring impacts on protected groups

## Step 8 - Monitor, review and improve

8. 1	<p><b>How will the impact of your proposal be monitored and improved upon going forward?</b> 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>
	<p>The impact of the Castle Gateway Scheme will be monitored through regular project review meetings, quarterly performance reporting, and updates to the Council's Executive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equality metrics will be tracked, including accessibility audits, user satisfaction surveys, and consultation feedback analysis.</li> <li>- Issues raised during construction or post-implementation will be logged and addressed through established project governance.</li> <li>- Learning will be documented and shared across council programmes to ensure continuous improvement in inclusive planning and delivery.</li> </ul>

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**Corporate Scrutiny****1 October 2025**

Report of the Chief Strategy Officer

**Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy****Summary**

1. The draft corporate communications and engagement strategy outlines how the council will communicate effectively with its core audiences. This includes residents, businesses, partners, community groups and stakeholders.
2. The aim of the strategy is to support the delivery of the council's core commitments, corporate priorities and to ensure inclusivity, accessibility and trust.
3. The strategy builds on the previous work of the service and seeks to ensure there's a clear focus for how it supports the council's work and priorities.

**Background**

4. In the early part of 2025, an audit review was carried out of the communications function, reporting at the end of May. This outlined a number of key recommendations, including the need for a clear and coherent strategy to shape the authority's communications activity.
5. From May the service has been developing a new strategic approach, linking to industry best practice, and with due regard to existing priorities and policies of the council.
6. During the period we've seen an increase in engagement levels on the council's owned channels, supported by the principles set out within this strategy. The strategy seeks to embed these approaches to continue this trend.
7. The draft strategy brings this work together into an approach that sets out the following:

- a. A consistent approach to how communications is applied and delivered, covering issues such as brand, tone of voice and the application of government communications industry standards.
- b. The focus of communications content, ensuring this is aligned to the council's priorities.
- c. An overview of how the service will deliver this work, with priority areas and an indicative timeline of activity.
- d. Appendices that cover issues such as the media protocol and approach to managing 'owned' social media channels.

### **Consultation**

8. A wide range of colleagues have been involved in the development of the draft strategy, including all team members and senior officers.
9. External sources referenced during the development and testing included the Local Government Association and the Government Communications Service.

### **Options**

10. This Scrutiny review seeks feedback on the draft plan.

### **Council Plan**

11. The strategy directly supports the outcomes of the Council Plan and its links to the plan are outlined within the document.

### **Implications**

#### **Financial**

12. There are no direct financial implications. A coordinated programme of communications will support the activity linked to long-term transformation, designed help to deliver long-term savings. It also includes work to support long-term investment into the city, in partnership with other key organisations.

#### **Human Resources (HR)**

13. Alongside the remit of this strategy, a coordinated approach for workforce communications is also underway, focusing on how to use

internal communications to directly support the outcomes of the Workforce Development Plan and long-term transformation work.

### **Equalities**

14. The strategy includes actions around enhancing our understanding of seldom heard voices in the city, to ensure we are listening and learning to the whole community. It also includes work around reviewing our style guide to ensure we can deliver accessible communications in different formats.

### **Legal**

15. There are no direct legal implications. The strategy does, however, include reference to the management of our social media channels where content posted by others may bring risks around legal issues such as defamation or contempt of court.

### **Crime and Disorder**

16. The strategy directly seeks to support community cohesion and our civic society, by helping to build trust and positive relationships with residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders.

### **Information Technology (IT)**

17. The strategy does not include any direct information technology implications.

### **Property**

18. The strategy does not include any direct property implications.

### **Risk Management**

19. The risks of not having a corporate communications strategy are that the function does not properly support the Council Plan objectives and needs of the organisation, residents, businesses and partners.

### **Recommendations**

20. Members are asked to consider the draft strategy, with particular regard to the following.
  - a. Do the approach and the actions set out within the strategy enable us to achieve our aims, as follows?

- i. To directly support the council's core commitments and priorities
  - ii. To communicate effectively with all the groups listed, in order to deliver the roles of the function as set out in section 3.
  - iii. To be inclusive and accessible in how we do this.
- b. Is the work structured in the most effective way to ensure we deliver against the Council Plan priorities and organisation's objectives?
  - c. Does the proposed approach to branding and tone of voice support the objectives of the strategy?

Reason: To ensure the effective delivery of the communications function.

## Contact Details

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 19.09.25

**Wards Affected:**

**All** ☒

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### Background Papers:

- Draft corporate communications and engagement strategy 2025-2027

## City of York Council

### Communications and Engagement Strategy 2025-2027

#### 1. Introduction

City of York Council is committed to delivering clear, transparent, and engaging communication that align with its four core commitments set out in the Council Plan, 2023-2027, One City for All:

- Equalities and Human Rights
- Affordability
- Climate
- Health

This strategy outlines how the council will communicate effectively with residents, businesses, partners, community groups and stakeholders to support its core commitments, corporate priorities and ensure inclusivity, accessibility, and trust. It sets out how we embed principles of engagement into the corporate communications service and how we use communications to support the organisation's workforce priorities.

#### 2. Vision and ambition

By 2027 we want the council's communications and engagement function to be seen as good practice nationally, and to be trusted locally by residents, business, key partners and the workforce. To do this we need to continue the focus on storytelling and audience insight to drive our proactive work, directly linked to the delivery of the council's strategic ambitions.

#### 3. The role of the communications service within the council

Meaningful communication and engagement is central to the work of the council. It supports the following.

- **Policy development** by giving people opportunities to contribute and for the council to listen, act and learn.
- **Delivery of services** by ensuring people have the information they need about how to access services.
- **Community cohesion and our civic society** by helping to build trust and positive relationships with residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders.

- **Long-term ambitions for the city** through an effective story of our place as somewhere to invest, work and live.
- **Support behaviour change** – to prompt residents or businesses to think or act differently to support the long-term goals of the city, as set out in the council plan and city-wide long-term strategy.
- **Innovation, productivity and long-term transformation** through strategic workforce communications, helping the organisation to continue to meet its financial challenges. This also supports our external communications by creating advocates for external messages from within our own workforce. Over 70% of colleagues live within the city.

#### **4. Public service communications standards**

The way we approach our communications and engagement should be driven by industry standards for government communications. This means we should use Government Communication Service (GCS) frameworks for campaign planning, evaluation and to support behaviour change. A programme of supporting training and learning for the team, based on these standards, will be delivered during the period of this strategy.

- [OASIS campaign planning framework](#) (objectives, audience insight, strategy, implementation, scoring)
- [GCS evaluation life cycle](#) (measuring of outputs, outtakes and outcomes)
- [EAST behaviour change framework](#) (easy, attractive, social and timely communications)

To deliver effective engagement campaigns, the council will follow the [LGA Future Conversations model](#). This encourages a two-way conversation with different audience groups to shape services that respond to residents' needs.

The communications and engagement function will support the wider corporate objective around our proposed neighbourhood model (due for consideration in autumn 2025). For example, the communications and communities teams should work in partnership to understand key advocates and ways of engaging within individual communities.

#### **5. A consistent approach to our council's brand**

Over recent years, the council has developed different logos or brands for individual services or partnerships. This makes it difficult for residents to know what the council is responsible for, and what it isn't. The approach doesn't support public understanding of the range of services and support delivered by the council.

It risks proactive and innovative work being seen as separate from the council, whilst leaving core activities – such as the payment of council tax – with the authority's brand.

City of York Council should aim to build a clear, consistent and recognisable visual identity across all the services it delivers, in line with best practice seen by organisations such as the NHS and Transport for London.

There may be exceptions, however. For services that operate within an environment where there is commercial competition, a strong identity outside the core council brand is an important part of the business model. This includes services such as fostering and registrars.

As a general rule, however, we will avoid creating any new separate logos or brands for services run directly by City of York Council. For key partnerships we may wish to consider a joint visual identity. This will be a decision of the head of communications and engagement, in discussion with the relevant head of service or director.

During the period of this plan we will refresh the council's style guide – with an emphasis of accessibility – with the aim of starting the process of a roll-out of updated guidance throughout the organisation.

## **6. A consistent approach to our tone of voice**

In our public-facing communications and engagement we should have due regard for the council's existing managing customer relations policy. This sets out how we will be respectful, friendly, honest and responsive. This includes when responding to social media posts, even those that can be challenging or confrontational.

In council-owned communication channels – including our social media and e-newsletters - we should strive for a plain English approach:

- Writing for nine-year olds (as per gov.uk guidance).
- Talking 'to' people, not 'about' people.
- One thought, one sentence.
- Confident in what we're saying.

## 7. What we need to deliver: supporting council objectives

During the period of this plan, the corporate story should focus on the key narratives that bring together the council plan priorities and areas of focus. We will group these together as follows.

For each, we will develop an over-arching core narrative. This core narrative will be supported by a range of case studies demonstrating the impact of the things we're doing with our people, places, community groups, businesses, and partners, together with how we operate. These should be human-interest led where possible, focusing on the impacts of our actions in our communities.

Within these communications, we should be clear as to why the action or decision has taken place – ultimately linked to the council supporting a more affordable, sustainable, accessible and healthier place.

<b>Core narrative theme – i.e. a single coherent story about...</b>	<b>Core commitments to reference</b>	<b>Council plan delivery priorities</b>	<b>Key work to be included in human interest case studies</b>
Neighbourhoods	Equalities Affordability Health	Ensure every primary school child gets a free school meal New team of Neighbourhood Caretakers Build 100% affordable housing on council-owned land	Fostering Adoption York Hungry Minds Neighbourhood Caretakers £500k investment in parks and open spaces Delivery of key front-line services such as street cleaning, road maintenance.



			Affordable homes
Transport and growth	Equalities Affordability Climate Health	Bring well-paid jobs to York  Accessible and sustainable city	Healthy places engagement  Local Transport Strategy  Bus Service Improvement plan  Station Gateway  Reimagining York Streets  Movement and Place schemes
Net zero ambition, health and housing	Climate Health	Pledge: insulate 1000s of homes to cut bills and reduce carbon	Public health  Ousewem  Climate priority delivery plan outcomes

## 8. How we need to deliver: moving to a strategic model of communications

In delivering this work we should think of communications as a strategic support to the work of the council, rather than more traditional models of communications and engagement. These principles are set out here.

Traditional communications	Strategic communications
Reactive	Planned
Information	Narrative
Elite	Grounded
One dimensional	Audience specific

Tactical	Coordinated
Broadcast	Relationship building
Brand anarchy	Brand discipline
Repetitive	Consistent
Siloed	Corporate
Press focus	Multi-platform
Linear	Evaluating, changing, improving
Unresponsive to feedback	Listening and learning

To achieve this, for the period 2025-27 the communications and engagement service will focus on three core strategic objectives as our first priorities.

### **Priority one – enhancing engagement**

<b>What we're aiming for</b>	<b>Actions we'll take to get there</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Ensure residents feel heard and valued in service and policy development and the democratic decision-making process and involved in shaping the city's future.	<p>A map of seldom-heard voices to broaden inclusive engagement, linked to the council's proposed integrated neighbourhood model.</p> <p>A tiered (gold, silver, bronze) approach for engagement consultations.</p> <p>Mapping digital advocates to support online community 'trusted voices'.</p>	<p>Ensure at least 80% of identified seldom heard voice groups engaged, as relevant to individual pieces of work.</p> <p>Identify at least 15 key digital advocates across the city and secure increased online audience reach compared to 2024-25 baseline.</p>

### **Priority two – harness partner commitment to the city to support effective and accessible communications and engagement**

<b>What we're aiming for</b>	<b>Actions we'll take to get there</b>	<b>Measure</b>
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<p>Ensure the council's story is part of wider city narratives.</p> <p>Maximise engagement through an effective network of trusted voices in our community.</p> <p>The council leads the way in joined-up public service communications in the city.</p>	<p>Make strategic use of the existing York heads of communication group, to support city-wide communications and engagement work.</p> <p>Ensure workforce communications supports our colleagues being able to advocate for the council and the city.</p> <p>Deliver on emergency planning priorities.</p>	<p>Convene regular heads of comms meetings with a view to developing city-wide narrative and case studies linked to this.</p> <p>Test x2 emergency planning exercises annually.</p>
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### **Priority three - strategic use of the channels the council has direct control over**

<b>What we're aiming for</b>	<b>Actions we'll take to get there</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<p>Focusing on telling stories from a residents' and businesses' perspective where possible, with real people explaining the impact or benefit of actions taken in their own lives.</p> <p>Prioritising video content for digital channels where possible, as we know this maximises engagement.</p>	<p>Channel mapping, to focus our resources on the channels that have the largest audience reach.</p> <p>Make more use of online and community advocates, expanding messaging reach.</p> <p>A workforce communications approach that directly supports the delivery of the council's workforce plan and transformation ambitions.</p>	<p>Update channels for different types of activity and align 100% of communications activity to the relevant channels.</p> <p>Identify at least 20 community advocates to support an ongoing uplift in engagement rates against the 2024-25 baseline.</p>

## 9. When we need to deliver: implementation plan

This is a two-year plan. As such, the delivery of the work above will be structured as follows. We will share outcomes and key performance metrics through regular feedback to senior officers and the council's Executive. This helps to build a culture of continuous learning and development. It's also supported by the introduction of a structured learning and development programme within the team.

### Our 2025-26 team priorities

Strategic objective	Focus of work	What success looks like
Engagement  Partnerships	<b>Effective communication partnerships (stage 1)</b>	Create working arrangements that facilitate effective day-to-day partnership working within comms to deal with emerging issues and emergency planning.  Build strong working relationship with city partners, via heads of comms group, and build workplan that has mutual benefit for all partners' communications activity.
Engagement  Partnerships  Owned channels	<b>Updated digital communications approach</b>	Channel mapping work to understand audiences and the best routes to engage.  Make best possible use of advocates in online spaces.  Primarily focus on video or image

		content as this drives biggest engagement.
Engagement  Owned channels	<b>Effective direct resident and media engagement</b>	<p>Review media protocols to ensure this still reflects the needs of the organisation, the team and the media.</p> <p>A focus on story telling.</p> <p>Structured engagement with key media and community contacts, to support long-term relationship building.</p> <p>Develop a coordinated content plan for e-newsletters.</p> <p>Updated brand guidelines to link with section 5, above.</p>

### Our 2026-27 team priorities

<b>Strategic objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Ambition</b>
Engagement  Partnerships	Effective communication partnerships (stage 2)	Lead on the creation of a multi-agency joint communication strategy around the ten-year city strategy priorities.
Engagement  Partnerships  Owned channels	<b>Applying consistent standards to community engagement</b>	Develop an effective map of 'seldom heard voices' for the city, in partnership with Communities team.

		<p>Create a tiered approach to council consultations to make best use of resources.</p> <p>Channel mapping to give proper analysis of audience engagement with owned and paid for media.</p> <p>Working with others, create a map of digital advocates and trusted voices based on geographic, demographic or special interest issues.</p>
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## 10. **Evaluation and continuous improvement**

- Apply Government Communication Service (GCS) evaluation cycle principles across campaigns.
- Work closely with services to establish final outcome measures, incorporating outtakes and outputs as core evaluation principles.
- Explore sentiment analysis tools for improved assessment of communication effectiveness.
- Link team targets, training, learning and development to the strategic communications plan.

## 11. **Conclusion**

This strategy positions City of York Council to deliver impactful, transparent, and resident-centred communication and engagement that aligns with key council priorities. Through strengthened partnerships, effective engagement, and structured workforce communications, this plan will enable the service to deliver an effective long-term approach for

how to use communications and engagement to support the delivery of core services and long-term ambitions for the council.

We want City of York Council communications to be seen as an example of industry best practice. This helps to raise the profile of the organisation within the local and regional government sector and with national government. This will directly support recruitment and retention of the best talent across the organisation, helping us to further improve for the people and the city we serve.

DRAFT

## Appendices

### Appendix A – a note of channel mapping

We will segment our audiences to improve targeting and relevance. This may include:

- Core engaged residents - active users of digital channels and newsletters
- Passive recipients - broadly informed but less likely to act
- Seldom-heard voices - including marginalised or underrepresented groups
- Strategic stakeholders - key partners, delivery partners, and policy influencers

Channel mapping work is underway to align audience groups with the most effective ways to reach them. The initial framework, supported by baseline recommendations, a storytelling guide and a draft channel-audience matrix, will provide a foundation for a more consistent and targeted communication across the organisation.

Development will continue on:

- Refining the channel-audience matrix, including ownership and guidance for use across the organisation
- Embedding storytelling and template tools across the organisation
- Defining frequency and balance of communication types.

This approach will support a more systematic use of channels while leaving space for ongoing refinement and adaptation.



## **Appendix B – a note on service risks**

Service risks have been reviewed as part of the development of this plan. A separate risk document is held by the service, to be reviewed every six months.

At the time of writing, the risks are organised into themes around the following.

- Systems and processes
- Resources and 'single points of failure'
- Financial
- External factors

These will be updated during each review point.

Some examples of actions taken in response to the latest service risk review include the following.

- An updated approach to social media management, with a single team member to act as the social media lead each week.
- A thorough review of access to our systems and accounts, with the removal of any individuals not directly linked to the team or specific campaign activities.
- All account passwords have been updated (August 2025)

## **Appendix C – newsdesk and media protocol**

### **City of York Council Media protocol, October 2019; updated for current political arrangements September 2025**

Amendments in the version below relate only to references to the previous political arrangements in 2019. These changes are highlighted.

#### **Introduction**

The Local Government Act places tight restrictions on what and who the council can legally publicise. This particularly applies to information about the activities of individual councillors, where the council is required by law to avoid any implication that it is spending public money on promoting a single political party or individual. The rules and legal restrictions governing official council publicity are many, complex and difficult to understand. Therefore, this protocol seeks to provide a more straightforward guide on the key aspects of the rules and how they impact upon our communications activity and publicity. It also sets out and defines the roles and responsibilities for officers and councillors.

This guidance relates primarily to council communications or publicity through the media. While the (traditional) media is a key channel for us, there are others which we can use. The principles outlined in this protocol will be similarly applied to all other channels such as social media, unless otherwise stated.

Official council publicity will only relate to the functions and activities of the city council, not individual political groups. This means we are largely restricted to using an officer or executive members who have an official position and/or area of responsibility within the organisation.

This protocol is divided into five parts as follows:

Part 1 - Those holding 'official positions'

Part 2 - Legal restrictions

Part 3 - Application of the rules (speaking on behalf of the council)

Part 4 - Special rules covering pre-election periods

Part 5 - The clearance process

#### **Part 1 - Those holding 'official positions'**

City of York Council's decision-making executive group is made up of councillors who each have responsibility for an area of council policy/business. These areas of responsibility are referred to as

executive 'portfolios'. ~~City of York Council currently has a joint administration and executive responsibilities are shared across two leadership groups. This arrangement is reflected in these protocols.~~

Chairs of Committees should consult with the communications team on any matters relating to the work of their committees. In particular chairs must make it clear when they speak to the media if they are speaking on behalf of the Council.

The Lord Mayor, in respect of his/her civic responsibilities, may also speak on behalf of the council in publicity relating to his/her civic responsibilities.

Officers who are directly approached by a member of the media should not answer questions themselves. The journalist should be referred to the communications team, which will manage the response.

Councillors who are directly approached by a member of the media may make use of the guidance contained in this protocol.

Officers and councillors who have contact with the media in a personal capacity or as members of non-council related organisations must not refer to their council posts and must make it clear to the journalist concerned that they are speaking in a personal capacity or on behalf of the non-council related organisation.

Trades union officers or political assistants, who are employees of the council and who have contact with the media in their trades union or political capacity, must make clear that they are speaking as a union or political group representative. If trades union officers have contact with the media in their capacity as a council employee, then the relevant provisions of this protocol relating to council officers will apply.

## **Part 2 - Legal restrictions**

The Local Government Act 1986 says the council must not publish anything, (including issuing news releases) which appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. The Act also says we must have regard to codes of practice about publicity as issued by the government. We will follow the code where publicity is addressed to the public at large, or a section of it, although different rules may apply where the council is consulting with the users of specific services. Other areas of legislation require that the council does not act incompatibly with individuals' right to respect for their private and family life, home and

correspondence, under the Human Rights Act 1998, and must only disclose personal data in line with the Data Protection Act.

Key legal points to note:

- Publicity describing the council's policies and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on facts or explanation of both.
- Publicity used to comment on, or respond to, the policies or proposals of the government, or other public authorities, should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate, and not prejudiced, unreasoning or party political.
- Publicity relating to the provision of a service should concentrate on providing factual information about the service.
- Publicity on controversial issues should not over-simplify facts, issues or arguments.
- Publicity should not attack or appear to undermine, generally accepted moral standards.
- The council must not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns, whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy.
- Publicity about the views or activities of individual councillors, is only appropriate where they are representing the council as a whole and usually in an official capacity such as executive portfolio holder.
- Between publishing a notice of an election and polling day, publicity should not be issued which deals with controversial issues, or which reports views or policies in a way that identifies them with individual parties, political groups or groups of councillors.
- Press releases and media interviews generally should not deal with issues about identifiable councillors, groups of councillors or individuals.
- The council's publicity must not criticise other organisations or individuals to the extent that this could be defamatory.

### **Part 3 - Application of the rules (speaking on behalf of the council)**

In general, we will use a named individual to speak on behalf of the authority. However, circumstances or the required response may dictate (particularly when dealing with a reactive query) that a quote provided by the Head of Communications acting as a spokesperson is more

convenient or practical – to be agreed in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

### **Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive portfolio holders**

The Leader and Deputy Leader will be jointly quoted in circumstances when they are representing the city in a city leader role and in connection with their role(s) as Chair/Vice Chair of the Executive. For example, major policy announcements, launches of high-profile council initiatives or schemes and civic emergencies will require the Leader and Deputy Leader to speak jointly on behalf of the council. On occasion, and when key policy statements or significant and sensitive issues need a comment or quote, both the Leader and Deputy will be consulted so they can agree on who should be quoted and whether joint statements are necessary.

Executive portfolio holders will be quoted in news releases which relate to their portfolio, including overall policy decisions and in response to press enquiries relating to their portfolio. When quoted, the Executive portfolio holder will appear first.

For photographs, the relevant Executive Member will be used and either the Leader or Deputy Leader (dependent on making sure both groups are involved) will be invited.

For videos, the relevant Executive Member, then the Leader and then Deputy Leader, has the right to appear. Quotes used in social media will feature all quotes in the proactive media release and / or the video.

### **Lord Mayor and civic party**

The Lord Mayor will be quoted in appropriate press releases and statements in respect of his/her civic responsibility and function, where the issue is ceremonial and an ambassadorial role to represent the city is required. In his/her absence the deputy Lord Mayor will be quoted.

### **Officers**

Officers will normally speak on behalf of the council in any announcement which relates to operational issues or where an officer has a specific area of responsibility which requires a professional profile or where the involvement of an elected portfolio holder is considered not appropriate (e.g. election matters, legal issues, code of conduct issues etc). All quotes and media activity by Council Officers will be carried out in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

In radio or TV interviews, where a detailed knowledge of the subject material is more important than broad policy, it may be more appropriate to put forward a suitably qualified officer to speak on behalf of the council.

Where a pre-prepared statement (already approved by an officer and/or Executive portfolio holder) needs to be read aloud for the benefit of a broadcast organisation, say, for instance in the event of a reactive query, a member of the communications team can speak on the authority's behalf. Council officers speaking on behalf of the authority will always be named.

There are no hard and fast rules about the level of seniority of officers who can be used in council publicity. Generally, it is best to identify someone with the correct balance of authority and subject knowledge for that specific issue. The communications team will advise on this.

### **Individual councillors and group support officers**

The Act and Code relating to publicity places tight restrictions on what and who the council can legally publicise. This applies particularly to individual councillors, where official publicity is restricted to using an officer with an official position and area of responsibility within the council to speak on behalf of the authority. The political assistant will provide professional communication support to elected members, to provide an explanation of the views of the relevant political group on matters facing the council or which relates to local ward matters of a non-political issue, which cannot be provided by the council communications team under its protocols.

Media statements which relate to ward specific issues will, as normal, be drafted in liaison with the relevant department and cleared by the Executive portfolio holder.

All proactive media statements will be shared with the Political Assistant. Partnerships Where the council is involved in issuing communication as part of a partnership arrangement, the partnership's arrangements should be followed. This would normally be the chair of the lead organisation. In the case of a communication being prepared on behalf of a number of partners it may be appropriate to offer each partner an opportunity to be quoted. All partners should be given an opportunity to approve the release within a set timeframe. Where partnerships are complex, or may last some time, a separate partnerships media protocol will be drafted. This will support the principles described in this media protocol, and also include how and when partners might be involved or consulted.

## **Code of Conduct issues**

For code of conduct issues, the Chief Executive will speak on behalf of the council in liaison with the Monitoring Officer. Any proactive statement will be first shared with the members involved with sufficient time provided for them to comment. For reactive lines to take, the Chief Executive will approve the statement and share it with members involved at the same time as distributing to the media. Any proactive statement will be shared with the member involved with sufficient time provided where possible for them to respond.

## **Responding to enquiries and criticism**

We always respond to enquiries through a named council officer or spokesperson depending on who issues the statement or speaks to the journalist. This may be the Head of Communications if appropriate. The relevant Executive Member may need, or wish, to respond to enquiries and they will be provided with the opportunity to do so, noting the restricted clearance times. Where the council is being criticised by a politician, it may not be appropriate to quote a council officer in response or put forward an officer for a radio or TV interview. This could easily give the false impression that council officers were politically partisan. In these cases, the communications team will seek to draft a factual response or briefing, and then it will be decided whether the Council can respond factually, or if the Leader or Deputy Leader, relevant Executive Member or another councillor(s) who has an official position can respond.

However, on rare occasions, officers may need to respond to specific criticisms when there is a need to correct factual information. Where an enquiry relates to a party-political issue, then such matters will be referred to the appropriate party's political assistant for consideration. However, a political assistant can only provide a press statement which expresses the group's view on the matter as it affects the council.

## **Responding to enquiries during emergencies/out of office hours**

The communications team provides an out-of-hours service for emergency media enquiries during times when the office is closed (between 5.30pm and 8.30am Monday to Friday, at weekends and on bank holidays). The on-duty officer from the communications team may be required to respond to an incident as it unfolds. Under these circumstances, he/she will follow the incident communications plan, establish the facts of the incident with the senior officers involved and provide a factual statement/public information response to the media.

Circumstances may dictate that it is difficult or impossible to arrange clearance with the relevant Executive Member before release to the media. If the media require a council officer for interview, the duty communications officer will, at first, try to contact the Leader and Deputy Leader or relevant Executive Member in the first instance to agree the appropriate response. If this cannot be achieved, the communications officer will contact a senior officer. A copy of any media statement will be sent to the relevant executive portfolio holder and political assistants. Regular updates on an emergency incident/situation will be provided to the party group offices.

#### **Part 4 - Special rules covering pre-election periods**

The period between the notice of an election and the election itself is particularly sensitive and publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual councillors or groups of councillors.

This means that during this period:

Proactive publicity:

- Caution must be exercised in the use of proactive publicity especially on contentious topics
- We must avoid proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election
- Proactive events arranged in this period should not involve members likely to be standing for election
- Publicity must be factual not party political

Reactive publicity:

- We may continue to quote appropriate councillors (including the Lord Mayor) in response to events or external enquiries, but only where the nature of the event or enquiry properly calls for such a response.
- Such responses must also be factual, so as not to allow people to infer we are promoting the views of a single political party. It is important to note that the above restrictions apply to council funded publicity.

This does not affect the ability of individual candidates to use their own resources to publicise themselves prior to any election, subject of course to the rules regarding election expenses and their declaration. The council's Deputy Returning (Monitoring) Officer will provide written



guidelines at the time of any relevant elections and should be consulted for advice for the appropriate approach on a case-by-case basis.

## **Part 5 - The clearance process**

One of the most important aspects of dealing with and managing the media is being able to provide a prompt response to a query, question or interview request. The sooner we can respond and involve ourselves in the story, the greater the chance we have to influence it. This is especially important where the council's reputation might be affected.

We also wish to influence the news agenda proactively by offering people for interview or providing case studies to illustrate topical issues.

We will use our forward planning process to identify opportunities in advance, but may still want/have to exploit on-the-day stories particularly when there is breaking news or developing stories. Many news organisations will have made most of their routine editorial decisions by mid-morning. It is therefore important we make prompt decisions in terms of our own proactive communications or when we are dealing with a reactive query; especially when we are working to tight deadlines.

A streamlined and simple clearance process is essential to the council's ability to influence or exploit the news agenda.

- The communications team will work with heads of service, assistant directors and directors to identify the most appropriate officer to provide the information required to respond to a query. A timely and efficient response to requests for information or comment is vital.
- For proactive media statements – we will aim to provide executive members with a two-day turnaround.
- For reactive media statements – we will respond to media deadlines, in consultation with the relevant Executive Member (usually within a couple of hours)

This protocol applies to office hours (8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday). Out-of-hours, or in the case of an emergency incident, it may be necessary to depart from this agreed approach.

The communications team will have responsibility for the council's policies and practices which reflect the style, tone and language to be used in written communications (described in the style guide). Any

communications material that does not reflect the council's policies may be amended.

The Political Assistant will share information, where appropriate, relating to interviews (print or broadcast) involving portfolio holders that have been arranged directly.

Responses, statements or comments which have been cleared previously may be re-used if appropriate.

The Chief Executive may speak on behalf of, and/or clear communication materials relating to the corporate business of, the council. A copy of any communication will be sent to The Political Assistant.

Proactive media activity should be planned as far in advance as possible to allow all enough time for officers and councillors to respond and clearance to be approved.

### **Clearing materials**

Reactive queries from the media relating to matters of fact or information concerning the council's routine business may be answered by a member of the communications team without automatic referral to a portfolio holder or the joint administration group political assistants.

Information may be provided to the journalist verbally, or, if requested, in a written statement. If requested in a written statement, the portfolio holder and/or political assistant will always be invited to clear.

Time restrictions will be shared at the time and should the time pass, the relevant Director or AD will be invited to clear. However, the communications team will copy the portfolio holder/political assistant into the email to officers regarding an enquiry, and ensure a quote is provided at the earliest opportunity (if appropriate).

The relevant Executive Member (including the Leader/**Deputy Leader** as appropriate) will always be involved in the response to reactive queries relating to policy, political issues, priority areas detailed in the council plan or matters of controversy, even if it is decided an officer-only response is appropriate.

In these cases, the communications team will:

- Work with the most appropriate officer(s) to establish the facts and source the information required for the response.
- Draft a proposed response and share this with the relevant officer(s), the relevant Executive Member/Leader/**Deputy Leader**

and the political assistant at the earliest opportunity for feedback. Any deadlines should be made clear at this stage.

- Liaise with the relevant Executive Member/Leader/Deputy Leader and the political assistant and make any amends as necessary and once clearance has been agreed by both offices, the response will be published.
- Forward a copy of the final response to officers and/or portfolio holders as appropriate.
- If there is any doubt to the correct approach to a response, advice will be sought from the Head of Communications and/or the political assistant. The Executive Members and their areas of responsibility are listed on the council website:

[www.york.gov.uk/Executive](http://www.york.gov.uk/Executive)

## **Appendix D – social media guidance**

We monitor engagement across our digital ‘owned’ channels each month, to understand what works and where adjustments are needed. This learning, alongside the channel mapping work (see appendix A), will shape how we use social media in the future.

In general terms, the following applies.

- Facebook – strongest reach, particularly for community events, services and activities. Audience is highly engaged with family, neighbourhood and day-to-day service content.
- Instagram – performs best with visual-led content. Topics such as city aesthetics, infrastructure projects and sustainability resonate strongly.
- LinkedIn – effective for professional content, including jobs, business initiatives and economic development.
- NextDoor – enables hyper-local targeting by wards. Reach is positive, but audience engagement tends to be lower.
- X (formerly Twitter) – corporate account remains dormant, retained only for emergency planning duties around warning and informing.

The Council does not currently operate other channels such as TikTok. Instead, our approach is to identify and work with advocates already active in those spaces.

### **Working principles of our approach to social media**

- Apply the audience segmentation learning from the channel mapping work to both content and the channel selection.
- Timing and frequency should follow audience engagement patterns identified through ongoing monitoring.
- When content is likely to generate significant interactions, scheduling should ensure the comms team is able to monitor and response effectively.

### **Direction of travel**

This guidance will continue to evolve as the channel-audience work is refined (see appendix A). Future development will focus on:

- Shifting from prescriptive posting schedules to evidence-led practice
- Integrating resource considerations into a wider engagement strategy
- Embedding flexibility so channels are used where they add the most value, not simply to maintain volume

## Frequency of content

Currently, the following is a guide for when posts perform best in terms of audience engagement. This will be updated during the period for this strategy as part of the channel mapping work.

- Facebook - no more than six times per day – 7am, 9am, midday, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm
- Instagram - no more than three times per day – 8am, 1pm, 6pm [using stories where possible, and instead of posts]
- LinkedIn - no more than four times per day – 7am, midday, 5pm, 9pm

## Dealing with social media comments

We want our online spaces to be safe places for community discussion. We need some rules to ensure this is the case. Our existing [social media policy](#) sets out the organisation's management of these channels.

During the period of this strategy, we will review our approach to responding to social media comments. This will be done in line with the council's managing customer relations policy and the social media policy. Currently, a decision on whether or not to comment is taken by a communication manager and/or Head of Communications, based on the potential impact of the comment. For example, as a rebuttal to untrue information about the issue on which we're posted. The decision seeks to consider resources versus impact of taking this action.

All posts on our social media channels should be posted with comments open, as part of our commitment to listening to the community. There are, however, exceptions. In the following cases we will close down the ability of people to comment. This is in line with the existing categories within the social media policy, but adds a consideration around resources.

- When posts attract abusive or harmful content
  - Comments that include hate speech, discrimination, threats or harassment.
  - Comments that may provoke personal attacks on colleagues, councillors or other platform users
- To prevent misinformation or trolling
  - Comments that attract repeated false claims
  - When users post off-topic comments that derails constructive discussions
- For sensitive topics

- Posts relating to tragic events or legal matters, such as defamation or contempt of court.
  - Where protection needs to be given for individuals involved
- When moderation resources are limited
  - Posts where we believe the risk of harmful content in the comments or responses is high, but we do not have the resources to be able to effectively moderate
- Careful consideration should be given to posts during the pre-election period if these attract political comments and narrative.

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix E – resources to deliver**

This communications strategy is designed to be delivered within existing team resources.

The service has five FTE core budget funded positions. This is line with the requirement to be able to support the statutory civil contingencies act, and the ability for the local authority to deliver a 24/7 warning and informing function over a sustained period. Other roles within the service are project-funded.

The activity set out within the strategy is a more holistic approach to how we deliver corporate communication and engagement support, alongside the individual services, projects and campaigns currently funding individual posts. The whole team resource, therefore, should be focused on delivering the strategy. Services, projects and campaign communications support will be drawn from resources across the team, rather than individual posts.

Working in this way will enable us to prioritise against the objectives set out within the strategy and deliver effectively for the whole organisation within the resources that we have.

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