

## AGENDA SUPPLEMENT

### Executive

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

**Date:** Tuesday, 12 May 2026

**Time:** 4.30 pm

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

The agenda for the above meeting was published on **Friday, 1 May 2026**. The attached additional documents are now available for the following agenda item:

### 3. **Public Participation** (Pages 3 - 22)

Please see attached written representations resubmitted from the April Executive meeting.

This agenda supplement was published on **Tuesday, 12 May 2026**

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**Executive meeting on Tuesday, 14 April 2026****Written representation in relation to agenda item 7, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact**

Dear Executive Members,

We are writing with regards to the forthcoming meeting to discuss the possibility of a “rest day” each week during the market.

We have traded at the Christmas market for many years as well as many large events through the year and other Christmas markets. We have also retailed at various locations with shops in North Wales since 1978. Therefore, we feel that we have a long and valuable experience in retail and events.

The York Christmas market is an important date on our calendar and feel that it is in the top numbers for Christmas events in the country.

As we’ve observed over time the market is extremely well organised and run whilst it’s trading.

Points that we note with regards to the meeting:

- The investment in Anti-terrorism measures is the safest we’ve seen. The bollards and their staffing alongside the general security team are very reassuring and professional.
- The Make it York team are also set up well for assistance at all times. Any incidents or concerns are dealt with quickly, calmly and professionally. From a safety point of view for customers we have only witnessed two issues when a customer has required help which was involving someone exiting Pret a Manger falling and someone who had come of M&S and felt faint. We, at the market asked the Make it York team to help which they did and people who were with them were extremely grateful.
- We find that locals come in to do their shopping and browsing early on Mondays to Thursdays particularly or early evening. We

always get great feedback from locals and a great deal of our repeat business is from locals.

- The issue of courier deliveries doesn't seem to apply as the courier companies drivers are all aware of the restrictions in the city centre, which would still apply if we were open or closed and we have never had any problems with deliveries.
- We have observed that York is a clean and tidy city and the extra wheelie bins by food / drink stalls works well. The provision for flat cardboard works well and stall holders appear to keep it tidy. We all help with clearing empty cups, food containers etc when they are dumped.
- Having the experience of trading at York for so long we have noticed that even locals are unaware of opening hours. Many come in after work and are disappointed that we are closing at 7pm. Likewise not impressed if we can't serve them until the opening time. We would like to see 10am opening but understand that delivery drivers are still on the streets until about 10:20. One later night (often a Thursday elsewhere) would be beneficial for customers and when linked in with shops works well for total Christmas experience.
- Tourists and locals would most definitely not expect the market to be closed and we would certainly get complaints following closures. We even had this situation when we had to close due to weather warnings in 2024.
- As we are quite far from York we book accommodation and staff the chalet accordingly to enable us to work at the entire market, as a lot of stall holders do so a break day would be of no assistance.
- I am a blue badge holder and feel that as city centre restrictions apply regardless it would not help mobility with the market being closed. York itself caters very well for disabled persons and at the chalets we are as helpful as possible.
- The only point that we have made previously in feedback is we feel staff lanyards would help with security, customers to identify people if they needed help and for restocking in evening when security are working.

Many thanks for the opportunity to offer our views.

Kind regards,

Caroline and Terry Matier  
Celtic Knitwear Company

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FAO CYC Executive Team  
City of York Council  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA

9th April 2026

## York Christmas Market Operating Hours

Dear Executive,

The Hospitality Association York (HAY) executive committee, and the Indie York steering committee have read the Executive papers and the recommendation to close the York Christmas Market in 2026 for one day per week, with the suggestion of Tuesday.

Various members of the two committees have also spoken with other bodies in the city, including York BID, Tourism Advisory Board (TAB), and Make It York, among others. The overall feeling is one of concern, and confusion.

The main concerns are:

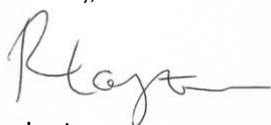
- Detrimental impact on trade, both market traders and other businesses. Many Indie York members take a stall at the Christmas markets expecting 7 days of trade\*, they will not recoup this lost day elsewhere.
- \*Furthermore, they will expect a reduction in their fees for the limited trading days, which will result in lost revenue for Make It York.
- Negative feedback from hotel visitors who expected there to be a market and are disappointed that there is not, having spent money on travel and accommodation with the main purpose to visit the markets.
- In addition to the above point; the inevitable challenge in communicating the Tuesday closure.

HAY and Indie York would like to understand the reason (and expected benefit) from this proposal:

In a recent York BID meeting, COYC stated that “we should not be holding events that not everyone can attend” referring to Blue Badge holders, however this proposed Tuesday closure will not grant this community access to the event.

There seems to be the suggestion that a Tuesday closure would mean both that (a) footfall will reduce on this day, and (b) that some of the traffic restrictions would be lifted on this day. HAY and Indie York feel that a reduction in footfall is unlikely, which leads us to question whether the Police agree to lifting traffic restrictions on the “closed” Tuesdays after all?

Yours faithfully,



**Rebecca Layton**

On behalf of the Hospitality Association York, and Indie York

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FAO CYC Executive Team  
City of York Council  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA

9<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Dear Executive Members,

### **York Christmas Market Operating Days and Times**

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the York Tourism Advisory Board (TAB) regarding the proposal to introduce a weekly closure day for the York Christmas Market in 2026.

The York Tourism Advisory Board brings together a broad and balanced representation of key stakeholders from across the city, including representation from the tourism and hospitality sectors, cultural organisations, residents, and York's Disability Rights Forum. This breadth of representation ensures that discussions reflect not only economic priorities but also the lived experiences of those who live in and access the city.

The proposed introduction of a weekly closure day raises several substantial concerns for members of the Advisory Board. Firstly, the economic impact of a reduced operating schedule would be highly significant. The Christmas Market plays a vital role in driving visitor numbers during the winter period, supporting not only market traders but also hotels, restaurants, attractions, and the wider retail sector. A planned closure day risks reducing overall visitor spend, with limited evidence that this demand would be redistributed to other days.

Secondly, from a visitor perspective, the proposal would result in a high risk of confusion and dissatisfaction. York's Christmas Market is an internationally recognised experience, drawing visitors who often plan their trips well in advance. The introduction of a regular closure day, particularly midweek, creates a strong likelihood that visitors will arrive expecting a full market experience and instead be disappointed. This has potential implications for the city's reputation and repeat visitation.

The Board also questions whether the proposal will achieve its stated objectives. In particular:

- It is unclear whether a single closure day would meaningfully reduce overall footfall or crowding pressures across the wider period
- There is limited evidence that accessibility challenges, particularly for Blue Badge holders, would be effectively addressed by this approach, as opposed to longer-term, structural improvements
- It remains unclear whether associated measures, such as changes to traffic restrictions, would be implemented in a way that delivers tangible benefits

More broadly, TAB members feel that the proposal does not yet present a sufficiently clear articulation of who benefits and how success would be measured.

The Tourism Advisory Board would strongly encourage consideration of alternative, longer-term solutions that balance the needs of residents, visitors, and businesses. This could include enhanced access strategies, improved crowd management approaches, and learning from comparable destinations that have successfully integrated major events with inclusive city centre access.

If the proposals are implemented, the Board would strongly recommend that this is treated as a time-limited pilot, with clearly defined success measures agreed in advance.

While TAB members fully recognise the need to balance the success of the Christmas Market with the experience of residents and accessibility considerations, at this stage, the Board is not persuaded that the proposed weekly closure represents the most effective or proportionate response to the issues identified.

We would welcome the opportunity to continue working collaboratively with the City of York Council and partners to identify approaches that protect both the vitality of the city's economy and the quality of experience for all who live in and visit York.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Brendan Paddison  
Chair  
York Tourism Advisory Board

**Executive meeting on Tuesday, 14 April 2026**

**Written representation in relation to agenda item 7, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact**

Dear Executive Members,

I strongly object to the proposal to reduce the York Christmas Market from 7 days to 6 days per week on a trial basis.

As a hotel operator in York city centre, my business is directly dependent on the consistency, reputation, and reliability of the Christmas market. The proposed “rest day” presents a material risk to bookings, visitor confidence, and the wider hospitality economy, which in my view is underestimated and inadequately mitigated in this report.

**1. Impact on Hotel Bookings and Overnight Economy**

The report acknowledges that the Christmas market supports overnight stays yet significantly underplays how fragile booking behaviour is in reality.

- Visitors – particularly coach groups and international tourists – book based on the assumption that the market operates daily.
- A single closure day introduces uncertainty, which is likely to:
  - Reduce forward bookings
  - Increase cancellations
  - Shift demand away from York to competing destinations.

The report assumes displacement of demand (25–75%), but this is not reflective of how tourism operates. Visitors do not simply “switch days”—they often choose a different city entirely if availability or clarity is reduced.

This is especially critical given:

- 44% of visitors stay overnight (para. 29)

- Overnight visitors generate disproportionately higher spend.

A disruption to this segment will have far greater economic consequences than modelled.

## **2. Coach Tourism and Group Travel Risk**

The report does not adequately consider coach operators, who are a major contributor to winter trade.

- Coach itineraries are fixed well in advance
- They require certainty of offer on the day of arrival
- A weekly closure creates a commercial disincentive to include York in itineraries.

This risks:

- Loss of large-volume bookings
- Long-term displacement beyond 2026 (not just a “trial” impact).

Once removed from tour programmes, York may be difficult to reinstate in future seasons.

## **3. Reputational Risk is Underestimated**

Paragraphs 12 and 41 acknowledge reputational risk but overestimate the effectiveness of communications.

In practice:

- Many visitors do not read detailed pre-travel information
- Day visitors and tourists already enroute will arrive expecting a full market
- A closed market will lead to:
  - Visitor frustration
  - Negative reviews
  - Complaints directed at hotels and local businesses.

Hotel operators will be placed in the position of:

- Managing dissatisfaction
- Issuing refunds or goodwill gestures
- Absorbing reputational damage for a decision outside their control.

This risk is systemic and unavoidable, not something that can be solved through marketing.

#### **4. Flawed Economic Assumptions**

The economic modelling contains several weaknesses:

- It admits difficulty in isolating market-driven footfall (para. 9, 32)
- It relies on a “blended” estimate between two extremes (para. 31), reducing reliability
- It assumes displacement of demand without strong evidence

Critically:

- The estimated loss of £2.6m–£7.82m is already described as “significant”
- This does not include:
  - Lost accommodation bookings made in advance
  - Secondary spending outside the city centre
  - Long-term behavioural change in visitors.

The true economic impact is therefore likely substantially higher than presented.

#### **5. Misalignment with Economic Strategy**

The proposal conflicts with the Council’s own stated objectives:

- Supporting a “vibrant and resilient city centre economy”
- Promoting inclusive growth
- Sustaining independent businesses and hospitality.

Reducing the operating days of the city's most economically significant event risks undermining these goals.

## **6. Disproportionate Impact on Hospitality Sector**

The report suggests a rest day may benefit some users, but it does not fairly assess the sectoral imbalance of impact:

- Hospitality and accommodation businesses rely on continuous footfall
- A weekly interruption reduces:
  - Occupancy rates
  - Length of stay
  - Food and beverage spend.

Meanwhile, any benefit to accessibility is:

- Limited to one day
- Not guaranteed to generate equivalent economic activity.

## **7. Operational Burden on Businesses**

Hotels and front-line businesses will bear the consequences of:

- Explaining closures to confused visitors
- Managing complaints and expectations
- Adjusting staffing and pricing models.

This represents a cost shift from the Council to private businesses, which is not acknowledged in the report.

## **8. Alternative Approach**

If accessibility improvements are required, alternative options should be prioritised that do not damage the city's core economic driver, such as:

- Enhanced accessibility measures during operating days
- Improved crowd management and infrastructure
- Targeted quiet hours rather than full closure days.

A full-day closure is a disproportionate intervention.

## **9. Conclusion**

The proposed 6-day operation introduces:

- Significant economic risk
- Disproportionate impact on hospitality businesses
- High likelihood of reputational damage
- Uncertain and overstated benefits

The Christmas market is a critical economic asset, and its strength lies in consistency, reliability, and reputation. Introducing a weekly closure undermines all three.

I therefore strongly urge the Executive to:

- Reject the 6-day trial proposal, and
- Retain the current 7-day operation model while exploring alternative accessibility solutions.

Kind regards,

Samantha Ashby  
General Manager

The Queens Hotel & Victoria Cloisters

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**Executive meeting on Tuesday, 14 April 2026**

**Written representation in relation to agenda item 7, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact**

Dear Executive Members,

I have traded at York Christmas Market for the past three years. Last year, 2025, the opening hours changed to start at 10:30am. During this time people did still arrive early, from about 9:30am, expecting some of the market to be open as in previous years. This led to some confusion.

In previous years local residents would access the market early, some wanting to look around before it got busy, others would have a look around on their way to work or education. This obviously could not happen last year due to the restrictions on opening times.

Over the last three years, I have noticed that those who struggle with busy areas would visit the market during the week. Monday and Tuesdays were especially visited by those with disabilities or the elderly, as these days tended to be quieter.

This included a range of disabilities including:

- Blind people or those with limited vision, with it being quieter, the trader could spend more time discussing items with them and they could move around easier.
- Those with social anxiety, autism, sensory difficulties etc. It was lovely to know they wanted to visit the market, and felt they could. I met some amazing people who continue to e-mail me and some will visit me on the Shambles market.
- Those with limited and difficulties with mobility. This included those using wheelchairs, electric wheelchairs, crutches, walking aids. Make It York provided ramps so they could access inside the huts. Other customers would often allow them to finish looking inside

before they tried to enter themselves. They would comment about visiting during the week as they felt they could access everything more comfortably.

I understand the police restricted access for blue badge holders during the Christmas market opening times, for safety reasons. Unfortunately, this has become a sign of our times, where a few will attempt to hurt, kill or injure others. Last year the police did an amazing job of keeping people safe. They were seen around a lot more, sniffer dogs were about regularly, and the behind the scenes would have been substantial. This allowed the Christmas market to continue and be enjoyed by so many people.

I am led to believe the later start to the market was for access to blue badge holders. Would there be a way that those with blue badges could have specifically designed park and ride which would allow them to be transported by approved vehicles? Rather than their own vehicles which carry a higher risk of anti-social behaviour.

Local businesses, shops, pubs, hotels, cafes etc. need the market to continue to provide a much-needed boost to their incomes to get through the quieter times. Speaking with local businesses they have expressed concerns about reducing and restrictions to the Christmas market. Business are struggling and York remains a much loved and visited area of the country. If businesses do not get the boost which the Christmas market provides, it may mean some can no longer continue with their businesses and have to shut down.

It would be such a shame if more restrictions were placed on the opening hours of the market, as this would inevitably have a large impact of those which need and want to visit on quieter times and days.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts.

Jane Guntrip  
(The Little Bee Hut)

**Executive meeting on Tuesday, 14 April 2026**

**Written representation in relation to agenda item 7, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact**

Dear Executive Members,

I am writing on behalf of The Queens Hotel, York City Centre, to object to the proposal to reduce the York Christmas Market to a six-day operation, with Tuesday as a weekly rest day.

While we recognise the importance of improving accessibility, we do not believe the current proposal is supported by sufficiently robust evidence to justify the economic risk to city-centre businesses.

The report itself accepts that it is difficult to separate the market's impact from normal seasonal trade, yet it still projects a potential loss of between £2.6 million and £7.82 million in city-centre spend. For hotels and other hospitality businesses, this risk is significant. A closed market day in the middle of the week is likely to affect visitor confidence, reduce overnight stays, shorten trips, and weaken midweek trade. Lost bookings are not necessarily recoverable on other days.

We are also concerned that the proposal assumes visitors will simply switch to another day, despite many trips being fixed around work patterns, accommodation availability, and travel plans. This is especially relevant for short-break visitors, group bookings, and tourists coming to York specifically for the Christmas Market experience.

In addition, a weekly closure creates a reputational risk for York. Even with advance publicity, some visitors will still arrive expecting the market to be open. This may lead to disappointment, negative feedback, and a perception that York is offering a reduced Christmas experience during its peak visitor season.

We therefore respectfully ask the Executive not to proceed with the proposed six-day trial in its current form and instead to explore

alternative ways of improving accessibility without reducing trading days during one of the most important periods of the year for the city centre economy.

Yours sincerely,

Mr L A Smith  
DIRECTOR  
The Queens Hotel

**Executive meeting on Tuesday, 14 April 2026**

**Written representation in relation to agenda item 7, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact**

Dear Executive Members,

I'm writing from Cooper King Distillery with regards the proposed 6-day market model. I'll apologise for perhaps not being more expansive, but did want to give the report and consultation some engagement from our end. We'd broadly support the 6-day model, though looking at our own takings from last year's markets we'd choose Monday as the rest day.

We'd also be keen to see a reduction in the amount we are paying to have a stand at the market given that the 6-day model means we will be losing a day's takings from each week of the market (albeit a quieter day). The main reason we would support the rest day, from our own perspective, is that it would just help with the strain it takes to staff, restock and organise the stall for the time we are on the market. As a small business it is quite literally all hands-on deck during the time we are on the market.

Thanks so much for the opportunity to engage with this. Please let me know if there is anything else you'd like to know from us.

Best regards,

Ben Brown | Events & Operations Coordinator  
Cooper King Distillery Ltd | York, England

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