Meeting	Place Scrutiny Committee
Date	21 July 2026
Present	Councillors Myers (Chair), Clarke, Hook, Perrett, K Taylor, Vassie, Orrell (Substitute), Rose (Substitute) and Waller (Substitute) Garry Taylor – Director of City Development Dave Atkinson - Director of Environmental and Regulatory Services Mark Henderson - Flood Risk Manager Councillor Kent – Executive Member for Enviroment and Climate Emergency
Apologies	Councillors Healey, Fenton, and Whitcroft

8. Apologies for Absence (17:31)

The Committee noted apologies from Cllrs Whitcroft, Healy, and Fenton who were substituted by Cllrs Rose, Orrell, and Waller.

Due to the apologies received by the Committee's vice chair, Cllr Vassie was elected vice chair for the meeting.

9. Declarations of Interest (17:33)

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

10. Public Participation (17:34)

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

Flick Williams asked that the York Central Mayoral Development zone be extended to include the station. She highlighted the current challenges for wheelchair users to cross the station and by including the station funding should be made available to address these challenges.

Helen Poulsen one of the founders of Ouse it or Lose it outlined the issues with the rivers water quality. She suggested a river wide charter to improve the rivers health and make it a place for leisure. She asked that the Council work with the University of York report on the Aqua Project and work to make York a swimmable city.

Andrew Mortimer outlined concerns about the levels of sewage overflows from Yorkshire Water. He highlighted as Chair of Friends of Hull Road Park that Yorkshire Water were discharging sewage directly into the park and asked that the CSO be closed to stop discharging sewage into the park.

Robin Norton was a regular rower in York and noted the levels of sewage in the Ouse. They highlighted that 6 CSO's had been broken in York so the data which showed high levels of swage discharge in a draught year in 2025 was likely larger than reported. They also stated that they felt Yorkshire Water were raiding bill payers to pay for under investment over 30 years.

Alister Boxall Professor of Environmental Science at the University of York highlighted the Econnect project that is motioning river chemicals. A dashboard of the data collected would be available in the autumn and would provide an opportunity for York to deal with water quality issues and therefore encouraged the committee to engage with the project.

11. Minutes (17:50)

The Committee enquired about when Make it York and the BID would be able to attend the Committee following a request to include them in discussions regarding parking charges. It was confirmed that there had not been space at this Committee meeting but that the Council's Scrutiny Officer would be reaching out to make arrangements for a future meeting.

Resolved:

Resolved: That the minutes of the Place Scrutiny Committee on 16 June 2026 be signed as a correct record of the meeting.

12. York's Water Network - a health check (18:32)

The Committee were joined by Tim Myatt, Head of Corporate Affairs, Steven Jackson, River Health Strategy Manager, and James Gudgeon, Pollution Reduction Manager from Yorkshire Water.

The Committee considered the reports provided by the Council and Yorkshire Water. Members highlighted issues relating to sewage discharges currently in the river Ouse and river Foss and asked about how additional housing planned in the Local Plan would affect this. Yorkshire Water highlighted its investment plan which was included its growth plan to account for more effluent from new developments and stated that it was important to ensure new developments didn’t have high levels of discharges. They also highlighted targets for storm overflows that Yorkshire Water were expected to meet by 2050.

The Committee highlighted the 64000 hrs of storm overflow discharge spills that Yorkshire Water stated were legal overflows. Members noted several times on dry days where these overflows were listed as down to rain and suggested that instead Yorkshire Water were using storm overflows as regular practice and not on only at times where there were storms. Yorkshire Water explained that they had targets to reduce discharges in half in five years. The Committee were told that dry day discharges are investigated by Yorkshire Water with issues like blockages being factor in causing discharges. Members questioned further whether these discharges were not purposeful on the part of Yorkshire Water highlighting 70% of cases from the live map data. Members highlighted multiple KPI failures by Yorkshire Water.

The Committee discussed whether Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 should be adopted which would provide a legal framework for making Sustainable Drainage Systems (suds) mandatory in new developments. Officers confirmed that adoption would require a drainage plan, currently most suds don’t have to be formally adopted, if they were more features could be implemented and managed more effectively. Yorkshire Water confirmed that they were in favour of adopting Schedule 3. The Committee enquired as to whether the Council should ensure suds are included on new developments. Officers noted that the Council kept to national standards but that they would be happy to review best practice and were establishing meetings with strategic planners at Yorkshire Water to further link up work on flood and water management.

Members enquired about the challenges presented in relation to older water infrastructure and whether enough was being done proactively. Yorkshire Water noted that in their previous five-year plan they replaced

100km of piping and planned for 1000km of replacements across its network in the current five-year plan. The Committee enquired further about the rate of discharges and noted that the data appeared to show an increase in discharges. Yorkshire Water argued that improvements in data collection had affected the way the data can be tracked and that there were not enough years with improved data collection to give a fair reflection on trends, but noted that discharges were too high and that investment was in place to bring down discharges.

The Committee discussed whether the Council should pursue a charter for the Ouse and certification for York as a swimmable city. The Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency stated that she would support these calls but would not want them to be prioritised over actual interventions to improve the quality of York's waterways and noted the importance of supporting the State of the Ouse report to establish the current level of the rivers water quality and options to improve this. It was also noted that bathing water status had other targets to achieve this status such as changing areas and appropriate areas for parking which could be explored but was not solely linked to good water quality. Yorkshire Water were asked if they would adopt the EU's Urban Waste Water Treatment Standard and they confirmed that they could not commit to this at the meeting but would explore this and confirm to the Executive Member their position.

Members highlighted that York currently had around 2000 broken gullies but was repairing on average 80 per year, Members enquired as to whether more were breaking per year than were fixed and if a resident raised concerns of a broken gully would the timescale for repair be around 25 years. Officers noted that gullies currently had to be fixed on a risk assessment approach as there was insufficient resources to fix all these gullies, therefore in some cases work would need to be reactive rather than being able to undertake a proactive approach to maintenance.

The Committee enquired as to whether the Council and Yorkshire Water worked to ensure areas that would see Yorkshire Water infrastructure work would also be linked with projects such as transport improvements planned by the Council. It was confirmed that Yorkshire Water provide the Council with where it intends to invest over the five-year period. Members also enquired about whether it was possible for partner organisations and the Council to develop a map of assets and ownership to assist with interventions.

The Committee also raised concerns relating to the privatisation of the water industry, they stated that there had been historic under investment and about one third of current bills went to dividends and debt repayments.

Yorkshire Water acknowledged that there were low levels of public support for the sector and that improvement was required and believed this could be done through their investment plan. Yorkshire Water noted that the reform agenda was still ongoing and the Council could engage with government on greater public control should there consider this appropriate. Members also raised concerns relating to what they believed was a bonus paid to Yorkshire Water CEO despite the company breaching targets which should have prevented bonuses being paid for the year. They also highlighted that no new reservoirs had been built since privatisation and concerns about the quality of paths and highways after work undertaken by Yorkshire Water. Yorkshire Water stated that OFWAT had confirmed that there had been no bonus paid to the company CEO and instead was a separate payment that was not a bonus. They also noted concerns relating to some path and road relaying and were working with the Council in relation to this.

Resolved:

i. To recommend that the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency explore how the Council could adopt Schedule 3 Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
ii. To recommend that the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency support the State of the Ouse and Foss report and explore whether a high-resolution water framework directive could be developed and adopted.
iii. To recommend that the Council review the all powers available at Local Plan Advisory group to refresh the Local Development Plan to address drainage and standing water on new developments.
iv. To recommend that the Council explore with partners to create a database of repair and ownership.
v. To request that the Cambridge Suds design guide be shared with the Committee.
vi. To request that Yorkshire Water provide Councillors with contacts for when their team is offline.
vii. To recommend that part of the update to the Council's Highways Infrastructure Asset plan to include work on gullies.

Reason: To deliver healthy rivers and an effective drainage system in our city and safeguard our communities from flood risk or environmental harm.

13. York Central Mayoral Development Zone (17:54)

The Committee were joined by James Farrar Chief Executive of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Officers introduced the report that sought the Committee's opinion on the Combined Authorities proposal for the York Central Mayoral Development Zone, ahead of the Council's Executive submitting the Council's position. Officers noted and agreed with the suggestion in public participation to recommend an expansion of the current geographical area of the proposed zone to include York Station. They suggested the stations inclusion would be appropriate due to the importance it would hold in linking York Central to the city centre. James Farrar explained that the zone would provide strategic positioning to assist in attracting public and private investment in the area.

The Committee considered the proposal and enquired about what the £500,000 allocation for the development of the zone would deliver and if it was needed in order to attract the reported £10m funding. It was confirmed that the £500,000 would come from the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority and would be used as an upfront cost covering areas such as staffing, planning, and external costs. The initial funding it was noted should assist in identifying what was required as the development zone would be seeking more than the currently planned £10m of funding.

Members noted previous delays in the delivery of York Central and asked whether partnership agreements were in place that would avoid further delays. It was confirmed that the Combined Authority was already a partner on the project so would not affect current partnership working. It was also noted that most funding for York Central would be directed from the Combined Authority, therefore, maintaining a strong relationship would assist with the delivery of the project.

The Committee made not of the new Prime Ministers stated desire to move more decision making to outside of London and whether the new 'Number 10 North' might affect York's ability to attract government department sites and jobs or if they would be moved closer to Manchester. James Farrar noted that it was very early in the new Prime Ministers tenure but would expect a push for more of government operations to be a benefit to York Central, particularly due to York being the best-connected city in the north of England.

Members discussed the boundaries of the zone and agreed that should be expanded to link York Central with the city centre. Members also enquired about whether historical buildings with tourism potential or further opportunities for transport opportunities such as light rail could be considered as part of the development zone. It was confirmed that York Central had its planning permission which helped identify the vision for the site and specific projects could be delivered by the development zone, but it would require maintaining a clear objective of the development zone. It was also confirmed that transport projects for York Central would be influenced by the objectives of the Councils Movement and Place Strategy.

Resolved:

i. To recommend that the Council request that York Station is included within the Development Zone.
ii. To request that the final proposal be shared with the Committee to provide any final thoughts before the Executive submits the Council's position on the Development Zone.
iii. To recommend that the £500,000 funding for the development of the Development Zone report clearly on what this funding is used for.

Reason: To submit the Committee's views of the Development Zone to the Executive before it is adopted.

14. Work Plan (20:38)

The Council's Scrutiny Officer introduced the Committee work plan, noting that further work would be undertaken with the Committee chair and vice chair on items for future meetings. The Committee enquired about whether an item on the potential for an incoming tourism tax could be explored by the Committee and it was noted that it would be considered whether this would work best as a scrutiny briefing or as a committee item.

Resolved:

i. Noted the Committee work plan.

Reason: To ensure the Committee maintains a programme of work.

Cllr Myers, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.31 pm and finished at 8.44 pm].