

Meeting	Executive
Date	12 May 2026
Present	Councillors Douglas (Chair), Kilbane (Vice-Chair), Kent, Lomas, Pavlovic, Ravilious, Steels-Walshaw and Webb
In attendance	Councillor Widdowson, Opposition Deputy Group Leader

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### **228. Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Leader of the Council welcomed everyone in attendance to the May Executive meeting. Members and Officers were invited to introduce themselves.

### **229. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Ayre, Opposition Group Leader.

Councillor Widdowson, Opposition Deputy Group Leader, substituted for Councillor Ayre.

### **230. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Douglas declared a pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact, in her capacity as a Director of Make it York Limited. She left the meeting during the consideration of this item and did not vote.

Councillor Widdowson declared an interest in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact, in her capacity as a Board Member of Make it York Limited. On the basis that she was a non-voting attendee at Executive, she remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion.

## 231. Public Participation

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

Louise Harris-Collins spoke remotely in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact. Louise emphasised that every trading day was critical to her business. That closing on a Tuesday represented a loss of five full days of trading, effectively removing an entire week's worth of revenue. That for businesses of a similar scale and a very difficult industry, this was not a minor inconvenience. It would have a significant financial impact. It was pointed out that whilst footfall may be lower midweek, Tuesday customers were often local residents, nearby office workers, and visitors on shorter breaks. A loyal audience who chose to visit on quieter days. Removing this option would not redistribute those customers to other days.

Flick Williams spoke remotely in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact. Flick stated that disabled people were not a homogeneous mass with either the same impairments or the same level of access need. Businesses who said that disabled people needed to suck it up in response to being totally excluded for six weeks of the year should examine their own access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, and understanding of the Equality Act.

Diane Roworth spoke remotely in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact. Diane spoke as a disabled person and Chair of York Access Forum, in favour of the recommendation for a resident's rest day during this year's Christmas Market. This was because City of York Council had strategies and responsibilities to uphold that were outlined in the report. The city centre must be a place for all residents, which included older and disabled people. A resident's rest day meant that people currently excluded from the city centre for the entire period of the Christmas Market would have a choice that they do not currently have to come into York for one day a week.

Simon Long spoke in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact. Simon was the owner of Shambles Kitchen, a proud York resident and one of the longest serving traders on the Christmas market. He was

representing not just himself, but 30 permanent staff who relied on him for their income. He stated that he could not afford to lose a day's trade knowing the impact on payroll for event staff long after the market had closed. That the Christmas Market had changed a lot over the years. Closing time used to be 9.00pm at the weekend. It had been reduced to 7.00pm in 2024 and very few people were aware of this. Visitors had driven miles to spend the night at the Christmas Market in York, only to find out it was closed. There was concern how people across the country were to be pre-warned not to come to York on specific days if they wanted to visit the Christmas Market.

Amanda Cooper spoke in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact. Amanda spoke on behalf of York Disability Rights Forum. She stated that the unexpected restrictions of the 2025 Christmas markets had been damaging. And when it was expected that routes were to be fully reopened in late December, one of the routes was immediately closed again for several weeks for layout changes. In addition, blue badge bays around the city were regularly abused. It meant that access to the city centre for blue badge holders remained fragile. It was felt that those who opposed the proposal should reflect that they too may become disabled one day. That including disabled people and residents sent out a positive statement about the sort of inclusive community that we wanted York to be.

Nick Miller spoke in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact. Nick was a food store operator and was on-site every day at the Christmas Market. He reported that last year his business received a record number of applicants seeking work. To close one day a week would stop the whole production and have a massive impact on the business and the amount of people that they could afford to employ on the shop floor and behind the scenes. It was stated that closure on one of the days would make the other days possibly even busier, which could potentially put more pressure on the Christmas Market as a whole. He also highlighted the limited timeframe available to make the event worthwhile and the significant risk / reward investment that traders made each year.

Rob Collins spoke in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact. Rob was a local business owner and had a cafe on Parliament Street. He stated

that he was very supportive of the Christmas Market and so were his customers that he spoke to. Due to spiralling costs his business relied on the Christmas Market. Traders lost two weeks in November when the Christmas Market was built and sales plummeted. It was reported that sales during the Christmas Market period were good. Once the Christmas Market closed, it was a ghost town of empty chalets for a week followed by a bleak January and February. November and December income enabled businesses to stay afloat over the following few months. Losing a Tuesday in December was so much more than losing a Tuesday in January. Hospitality was on its knees. The Council's support was needed right now.

The Leader of the Council concluded this item by reporting that ten written representations had been submitted in advance of the meeting. A further seven written representations had been resubmitted from the April Executive meeting. These had all been taken into account and published on the Council's website.

**232. Minutes**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 14 April 2026 be approved and then signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**233. Forward Plan**

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

**234. York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact**

Councillor Douglas left the meeting during the consideration of this item. Councillor Kilbane took the Chair. (Minute no. 230 refers)

The Director of City Development submitted a report which set out a strategic approach to events and accessibility of the city centre. It followed further discussions with North Yorkshire Police and Counter Terrorism Security Advisors since the April Executive meeting. The options and recommendations had been reviewed and refined.

The following annexes were attached to the report:

- Annex A: Human Rights Equality Assessment (HREAT)
- Annex B: Previous Legal Advice.

The following officers were in attendance for this item:

- Richard Webb, Chief Executive
- Bryn Roberts, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
- Garry Taylor, Director of City Development
- Ben Murphy, Head of City Development.

The Director of City Development advised that the report presented an option which proposed that each Tuesday be allocated as the rest day for the whole six-week period of the Christmas Market. Tuesday was considered the least impactful day. It did not interfere with the weekend overnight stay economy and it presented the lowest risk since the city centre was not operating at its full capacity. The approach was to be managed through a dynamic risk appraisal. It involved working with key partners reviewing local and national security threats. It was reported that economic scenarios suggested a potential drop of between 1.87% and 5.62% in terms of income spent on the Christmas Market during the six-week period. That could range between £2.6m and £7m. The final figure was unknown given that the Christmas Market had not previously operated in this way.

The Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer reported that since the April Executive meeting there had been number of vehicle as weapon attacks in the UK and across Europe. Consequently, the UK government had raised the national threat level from substantial to severe, which suggested an attack was highly likely. It was noted that Executive should be conscious of these factors when making a decision. In response to a query raised at the April Executive meeting, it was advised that the risk of a prosecution for corporate manslaughter or manslaughter by negligence was judged to be extremely low bordering on non-existent. That the Council had taken all reasonable steps and had sought professional advice as appropriate. It was advised that ultimately, in any vehicle as weapon attack, responsibility lay with the individual carrying out the attack, not the Council.

The Chief Executive reported that there had been further consideration of the issues. That it had been a difficult balance between different legislative and other council responsibilities in terms of the community, businesses and public safety. There was to be a regular assessment of the risk situation which meant that on any of the seven days if there was new information or intelligence that posed a risk to the public then a different decision may be required. There was also to be a joint group in the Place Directorate, which the Director of City Development was to attend with other key partners to keep the whole situation and planning on track. In addition, there was to be additional hostile vehicle protection in place, the details of which were set out in the report.

The Executive Member reported that the city centre brought many advantages and challenges. One of those challenges was accessibility. That access to the city centre was not optimal at times. That the design of the hostile vehicle mitigation measures that had been installed meant that protection for city centre events limited this access even further by shutting off two loops that enabled blue badge holders' closer access to central shopping and service areas. It was the job of Executive to listen carefully to all the advice, evidence, and guidance that had been provided. There was also a need to balance the views of traders, disabled people and the organisations representing them. The balancing decision was difficult and required careful consideration of all issues. Looking forward, it was important to ensure that events in the city centre were as accessible as possible for everyone.

**Resolved (unanimously):**

That Executive

- i) Approves on a trial basis for 2026, to progress a 6-day Christmas Market, with 10.30am to 7pm market operation on the operational days, and on the basis of the evidence presented, to select Tuesday as the rest day, and as part of this, on the rest day, to restrict Blue Badge access to the Goodramgate access loop only, with additional temporary Hostile Vehicle Measures to protect Church Street, Low Petergate and King's Square from vehicles;
- ii) Receives a further report early in 2027 containing detailed

analysis of the impacts and outcome of this trial;

- iii) Establishes an interface group between the Council and other necessary parties to ensure effective joint planning, risk assessment and mitigation, such group to include the Council's Chief Executive, Director of Governance, Director of City Development and other officers as appropriate in order that such group will undertake an ongoing process of dynamic risk assessment to prepare for, and assess, any serious risks which may emerge, and which could impact on the proposed arrangements for any of the days; and
- iv) That the additional costs of temporary HVM set out at i) above be met from existing budgets.

**Reason:** To allow the trialling of an approach to providing improvements for residents, visitors and disabled people in accessing the City Centre through reduced operating hours, and in a way which is deliverable operationally, considers the safety and security of the city centre area, and minimises economic impacts to the city.

### **235. Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

Councillor Douglas, Chair

(The meeting started at 4.30 pm and finished at 5.28 pm).