

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)