

Leader and Executive Report to Full Council, July 2026

Leader of the Council, Councillor Claire Douglas

Welcome to Richard Webb, Chief Executive, City of York Council (CYC)

I start my report by welcoming Richard Webb the new Chief Executive at the Council to his role. Richard joined CYC on 30 March 2026 and has now been with us for three months. Richard has already met many, many partners, residents, business leaders, communities and voluntary organisations across the city. He has had a significant impact across York so far and is very ambitious for CYC, our city and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority area. I am thoroughly enjoying working with him across both opportunities and challenges for our city. He will continue to meet people, leaders and communities over the coming months as he beds himself into his role and our fantastic city.

Our City, Our Community

I also want to welcome the incoming Lord Mayor for 2026-27, the Right Honourable Cllr Margaret Wells and her Civic Party who took over the role from the outgoing civic party in May. They have already attended a huge range of events and organisations across York. Many of which I have enjoyed attending alongside them. I wish them all the very best for the coming civic year.

Also on civic matters, I want to recognise the sad passing of Geoff Turner and his service to our city through his 15 years volunteering at the Mansion House. We send our condolences to his loved ones. I am tremendously proud of the commitment of people and organisations across our fine city to bring people together to celebrate, learn about and appreciate each other. The highlights for me over the past few months have been:

The promotion of York City to the English Football League in April. I was fortunate to attend the last few games of the season at the LNER Community Stadium and see the amazing game against Rochdale FC on the large screens, where promotion was clinched. What an amazing day to top off an amazing, record-breaking season for the club. The

promotion celebration at the Community Stadium and bus top parade through the city were both a site to behold that many of us across the city will hold dear for many years to come.

Congratulations to everyone who contributed to the club's success, club owners, sponsors, players, staff and fans. We should all be rightly proud of this achievement and look forward to the 2026-27 season in League Two of the EFL.

I thoroughly enjoyed attending the Vyshyvanka Day celebration at the Merchant Taylor's Hall with York's Ukrainian community. A day for celebrating and preserving Ukrainian culture, coming together and remembering loved ones both close and far away. Thank you to the community for inviting me to be with you.

One of the most joyous events of the year so far was the York Health and Arts Mela in Museum Gardens in May. It was an absolutely fantastic event bringing people from a range of cultures and backgrounds together to celebrate our collective diversity, traditions and connections with a focus around health, culture and arts.

Our city turned out in strength to celebrate the day, it goes from strength-to-strength year on year. Many thanks to the range of organisers and sponsors who make this fantastic event possible.

York Pride continues to grow in strength year after year. Another fantastic day of celebration, campaigning and remembering. This truly is one of the highlights of the year in York but it should never be forgotten that the rights and freedoms of the LGBT+ community have been very hard fought and won. Concerns that these rights are being eroded around the world are very real. As I have said many times before it is of upmost importance in our city that every man, woman and child should feel and be safe and valued in our city. None of our focus or work should be lost until we can truly claim that to be the case on an enduring and lasting basis.

In my role as the Armed Forces Champion for CYC and our city I was tremendously honoured and proud to attend the Yorkshire Regiment's 20th Anniversary Service, Parade and Inspection at York Minster and Minster Gardens in June. I met the Brigadier, Lisa Brooks, the

commander of the 19th Light Brigade and a range of senior officers, soldiers and cadets across the Yorkshire Regiment. A hugely proud day for all the soldiers who travelled the distance from Warminster. Armed Forces Week was also celebrated last month that started with the flag flying ceremony at the Mansion House and included a Reserves Day event hosted in West Offices.

I, alongside our military community across York and North Yorkshire look forward to our celebration of Armed Forces Day 2026 on 12 July at the LNER Community Stadium with a free Football Festival and family day. This is an opportunity for our serving personnel, reserves, cadets and their families to come together for a free day of entertainment, rest and relaxation. Thanking them for the hard work, service and commitment they show to our city, region and country every day of the year. A big thank you to all who either form part of our armed forces community in York or support them in their vital work.

In other matters:

I made an important and sobering visit to the UK Resilience Academy near Easingwold to meet with the Mayor of Lviv, Andriy Sadovyi and his team. This was a hugely humbling experience and opportunity for me and colleagues across the MoD and Cabinet office to understand and learn from the complexity of challenge experienced by Mayor Sadovyi with the responsibility for running a large city in an active war zone. We should all remember and be thankful for the environment of peace and relative safety we live in in our fine city.

Mayor David Skaith and I welcomed Beth Russell, Second Permanent Secretary to the Treasury for a visit to York in April. She and her team had a tour of the York Central development site and Fulford Road Police Station to better understand both York's opportunities and challenges concerning our public sector buildings and facilities. We discussed both the outlook for the here and now for our fine city and our 10-15 year future and York's position within the Northern Growth Corridor, and Northern Powerhouse Rail as a driver of economic growth and opportunity for our region, the North and the UK.

This visit was then followed up by a visit by Richard Webb and me to the Darlington Economic Campus where I presented to almost 200 civil

servants from Treasury, Department for Business (DBT) and Department of Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) covering the opportunity and partnership work around York Central. This included a case study of successful Public Sector Reform looking at CYC Children's Services recent journey from a Requires Improvement rating by OFSTED in 2022 to Outstanding in all areas in 2024.

The Prime Minister (PM) and Secretary of State Steve Reed MBE MP also visited York Central with Mayor David Skaith and I in June. These relationships at the most senior levels of government with the PM, Ministers and civil servants are so important for York. I have developed these over the past three years and will continue to do so in order to be able to make the strong case for investment in York. These did not exist before Labour took power of the Council in May 2023, a real detriment to our city.

York Central Development Update

The York Central development continues to move forward at pace. It cannot be underestimated as to the level of partnership working across Homes England, Network Rail, CYC, The National Railway Museum (NRM) and the developers that is required to drive delivery, investment and good quality place making.

Recently the adoption of road infrastructure has allowed the stopping up of Leeman Road and enabled the construction of the NRM's Central Hall to begin. During the Prime Minister's visit to York in June he announced a further investment into the NRM's Central Hall project from government, which now stands at £18million and has been vital to ensuring this important project can move forward. One of the main commercial buildings on the site, the Government Property Agency (GPA) building that will host approximately 2,600 civil service jobs, has received ministerial sign off and progresses forward with partner work between CYC, and government departments including Cabinet Office, GPA and Homes England to develop the model for what this Government Hub will look like. There is huge opportunity for further good quality jobs to come to the site as we look at York as a Campus of Opportunity for government departments, their satellite partner organisations, our two universities and local seed and growing

businesses. It is very exciting and will offer opportunity for a range of jobs across a range of skill levels and sectors.

Phase 1 of the York Central project is now in the planning process, and we hope will come to committee in the early Autumn. This includes 1,000 homes, with an initial 20% affordable (and a hoped for additional 20% affordable, subject to partnership discussions), two public squares, the central park, the new station entrance, hotel and commercial space. Network Rail also have the plans for the Wilton Rise replacement bridge in planning.

The greatest spectacle of the project so far took place over the early May public holiday weekend when the road and pedestrian bridge across the East Coast Mainline was lifted into place. It is an amazing structure of significant size. There was much interest in the lift and placement of the bridge given the need to close the East Coast Mainline to complete the job safely and the largest crane in Europe was used for the lift, coming in from Belgium especially for the job.

York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA)

The progress of the Combined Authority continues with the application approved by the Cabinet earlier this year for YNYCA to request to become an Established Mayoral Authority. The application and request have been submitted to government and an announcement is expected imminently. This will give the Combined Authority increased powers and preferential access to funding pots that it currently doesn't have. This is a really important move forward for us all.

In May, the Combined Authority hosted its first pavilion and significant presence at the hugely important UKREiiF trade show in Leeds. This is the largest real estate and infrastructure development trade show in the country. It was a fantastic opportunity for the Mayor, myself and officers to present the vision and opportunity for York and North Yorkshire to the UK. There was fantastic interest from both commercial and government senior leaders and we were particularly glad to be able to welcome both the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves MP and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, KC Lucy Rigby MP to the YNYCA stand to discuss our city and region. Another hugely important show of the power of government relationships for the success of our patch.

Delivering for our City

I continue to work ceaselessly alongside my Executive Team to build opportunities, improved services and a great place to live for the residents of all ages across York.

Some further recent examples of this include hosting alongside Mayor David Skaith and Rachael Maskell MP a Rail Innovation Roundtable, outlining the power of our local Rail Cluster to Rail Minister Sir Peter Hendy. And the recent visit of the Corporate Director of Children's Services and Education to Westminster to meet with Minister Gould and the Chief Social Worker to discuss the vision for York's Children's Services into the future and how we can drive sector improvement across the UK.

The following reports from the Executive Members will outline further achievements of the Labour administration for the people of York. Life in local government and authorities we all know is filled with challenges for the future, but York has a lot to be optimistic about and to celebrate. We are a city that pulls together during times of challenge and we continue to show our unerring commitment to our city, our people and our communities each and every day.

Deputy Council Leader and Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education, Councillor Bob Webb

The Government is moving at pace when it comes to changes to support Children and Young People. In York, we are leading the way, something that is now recognised nationally.

Schools White Paper and SEND Reform

Council officers have been incredibly busy developing a SEND Reform plan as a basis for our work here in York. It is widely recognised that the SEND system introduced by the Coalition Government is not working for children and families and change is required.

To develop a reform plan in York we were one step ahead as we could build on our Inclusion and Belonging Strategy; designed to support inclusive practice in mainstream education. Essentially doing everything we can to increase the number of young people accessing, enjoying and thriving in our schools, a place where they should absolutely feel they belong.

The Government's main aims around SEND reform are focussed on increasing the opportunity for children and young people with additional needs to succeed in their local school. This requires our schools, which provide an excellent education for a very large percentage of children in York, to adapt and change to modernise. To do this, the Government is providing financial support. In the financial year 2026-27, York will receive the following:

- £2.3m for capital projects to deliver buildings adaptations in mainstream schools, alongside high quality specialist provision
- £1.3m to implement 'Experts at Hand' and recruit staff such as Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists.

This investment in our provision for children and their families is incredibly welcome and is really representative of the differences that we are seeing with a Labour Government.

Best Start in Life

The Best Start in Life strategy is another big shift in Government policy, highlighting their focus on children and families.

Firstly, the Government has given every authority a target of 75% of young people reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception Year in 2027/28. York has been given a higher target of 79%, alongside 58.1% for children in receipt of a Free School Meal. In order to achieve this level, we need a plan that makes a difference for families.

In York, we have listened to what families have to say and have developed a plan that is based on connections, good quality support and a sense of belonging within a person's community.

We will:

Develop a 'no wrong door' approach to early years support across our services and that of our partners, and:

- Develop small neighbourhood teams of staff to work with communities to help families build networks of support;
- Support families to gain knowledge and expertise of best practice for raising their children;
- Support settings and schools to expand activities like stay-and-play groups, toddler groups, parent meet-ups and community activities.

But this is only part of what we have the ambition and drive to do. As well as a plan to get a higher proportion of our children to a good level of development, we shall develop a Centre of Excellence for Early Years. This Centre of Excellence will act like a lens into Early Years practice to identify what is working well and more importantly why? By working with partners, we will start to develop a research base that can inform best practice in York and support our children and families alongside educators to raise our youngest minds up to thrive in the 21st Century. This is a great example of going above and beyond in York because we can, and we should.

Toilet Training

Sadly, too many of our children are reaching school age and still wearing nappies. There are many reasons for this including the convenience of disposable nappies and improvements in their design, as well as greater pressures on family life than ever before. Disposable nappies are expensive and bad for the planet so, we have to do what we can to support families help their little ones take those important steps in their development. It will help our children grow in confidence and allows our teaching staff to focus on education.

That is why the Healthy Child Service are providing workshops throughout the summer to support families through the toilet training challenges. These workshops last around an hour and they are for adults only; but if parents have accessibility needs or no childcare then they are encouraged to get in touch and let staff know when booking. Information can be found on the Raise York website:

<https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/babies-young-children/potty-toilet-training>.

To support this work, around 1700 families will also receive information booklets, produced in partnership with charity Kindred Squared, City of York Council, alongside schools, early years' provisions and health professionals in York.

This city-wide initiative is the first of its kind in England.

Secondary School Public Speaking Competition

It was very pleasing to see the city's Public Speaking Competition revived by City of York Council. Historically, this has been an excellent event and a great opportunity for our students to practice their oracy and have their voices heard in a different way for the first time.

Attended by the Lord Mayor, this prestigious competition nearly never happened in 2026, but luckily the Council stepped up and we set up a steering group, engaged with partners and got the competition flying again. Thanks go to those partners including: York College who designed and produced the trophies, York Independent State School

Partnership (ISSP) who coordinated the event and the Company of Merchant Adventurers who provided the wonderful venue.

The next competition will be the Primary event and is taking place on Tuesday, 17 November. Invitations will follow and it would be fantastic to see as many councillors there as possible.

Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care, **Councillor Lucy Steels-Walshaw**

Following last Full Council, I have continued to bring forward public-facing initiatives, operational improvements, and partnership developments that strengthen York's approach to public health and adult social care. This period has focused on visibility, prevention, neighbourhood-level support, and ensuring residents have clear routes into accessing help.

Advancing and Championing Services

A central priority has been advancing the Neighbourhood Teams model, ensuring that our integrated, place-based approach is not only operational but increasingly visible to residents. York's Local Area Coordinators continue to deliver their evidence-based approach in our communities, with new members of staff joining the team earlier this year. As the team evolves and the model of LAC shifts to cover the 4 neighbourhoods, this will improve visibility, strengthening early-help pathways, and ensuring residents have trusted, local support rooted in community relationships. This work has been well-received in public forums, with residents reporting clearer access to advice, advocacy, and preventative support. Public engagement highlights how these teams are improving access to early help, reducing duplication, and supporting people to remain independent for longer.

I also continue to champion York's fantastic progress as part of the Inclusive Recovery Cities network, emphasising our commitment to reducing stigmas, strengthening recovery pathways, and ensuring lived experience is embedded in service design. This includes providing updates to partners, and residents on the work of the Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board, including improvements in access to treatment and the development of trauma-informed practice across the system. A key public-facing initiative this quarter has been the work of York's Health Trainers, who developed quick, practical tips to help residents stay healthy and safe during the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Their advice, covering hydration, pacing alcohol consumption, staying active, and looking after mental wellbeing, has been and continues to be shared widely through council channels and community networks. This has

strengthened our preventative messaging at a time when increased social activity can heighten risks around alcohol harm, heat exposure and stress.

Tackling Abuse

Major sporting events are recognised as high-risk periods for violence against women and girls, including heightened levels of domestic abuse. In line with York's preventative public health approach, the Council has worked proactively with North Yorkshire Police and York BID to mitigate the additional risks associated with the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The Council's Domestic Abuse Engagement Officers have led targeted prevention work across neighbourhoods and key community settings. This includes approaching licensed premises with colleagues to offer domestic abuse awareness sessions and ensure information on victim support and behaviour-change services was clearly displayed. Officers also delivered training to community leaders and local businesses on recognising abuse, responding safely to disclosures and signposting into specialist services. Awareness is also being raised further through school communications, highlighting the heightened risks during major events. We have also ensured that the Survivor Voice continues to inform the work of the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.

As a council we continue to prioritise the voice of residents. Through regular engagement across York with residents and with council staff, we prioritise ensuring that feedback from people using services directly informs decision-making. This has included updates on how lived experience is shaping commissioning, neighbourhood delivery as well as recovery pathways.

Across all areas, my focus remains clear: strengthening prevention, improving access to services, and ensuring York's health and care system is compassionate, coordinated and responsive to the needs of residents.

Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency,
Councillor Jenny Kent

Celebrating Cleaner Air

York has successfully met national air pollution targets for the second consecutive year. Our 2026 Air Quality Annual Status Report shows that all monitored areas across the city are below the 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ legal limit for nitrogen dioxide, with levels in many locations dropping to their lowest in 15 years. This is a huge benefit for the health of the whole city, but I especially want to note the continued improvement in my own ward. Having walked past the Holgate Road monitor for nearly 30 years, the difference is palpable. It showed the largest improvement of 10.6% NO₂ reduction between 2024 and 2025, on top of the reductions the previous year.

We continue to aim for the more stringent WHO targets via our fourth Air Quality Action Plan, and noteworthy updates include:

- Council Fleet: 90% of CYC operational cars and vans under 3.5 T are now electric or plug-in hybrids.
- 45% of licensed taxis are low-emissions vehicles.
- A city-wide Smoke Control Area comes into force this November to reduce domestic emissions.

Parks Investment

Our once in a generation investment in Parks is gathering pace with installations going in at Glen Gardens, Heworth and Crombie Avenue, Clifton for the summer holidays. New paths, surfacing, painted railings and equipment have been installed in Hull Road Park and at Cornlands Road in Westfield. Consultation with local schools in Westfield and Clifton have been popular, and the Accessible and Inclusive Play survey attracted over 200 responses and made BBC News. It is so important that we shape our public spaces for the benefit of all.

Clean Energy Independence

We continue the ambition to cut our dependence on volatile fossil fuel markets, which do not have our best interests at heart, and develop clean, home grown, energy, to lower bills, ensure price stability and increase comfort for our communities and businesses.

We have accepted grant funding from the Mayoral Combined Authority to:

- Complete a full business case for a Green Energy Park at Harewood Whin (£200k)
- Complete a techno-economic feasibility study for a city centre heat network (£100k)
- Provide staff capacity to support delivery of the Energy Generation Accelerator Programme (£130k)

It's also important to note the exciting developments from our partners in York and across the region. The University of York is developing geothermal energy for the campus, with potential off takers in the surrounding area. A good news story is the York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Carbon Negative Challenge Fund project on geothermal for rural communities. A more recent highlight this month was a visit to Kirby Misperton, where a former gas well, and the focus of passionate opposition to fracking, is being repurposed into a geothermal well to supply the village with clean, affordable energy. This innovative project could pave the way for rural decarbonisation, and it was so cheering to see the people, Parish Council, Hotel, and local businesses including Flamingo Land, fully supportive of the project.

Here in York, it was inspirational to be at the opening dedication of 1 Deangate, part of the Minster estate, now fully decarbonised with solar roof slates. Through an ambitious Neighbourhood Plan, the Minster is preserving the charm and heritage of its ancient buildings whilst cutting emissions and preserving them for future generations. Genuinely world leading work on our doorstep.

Recycling Review

The consultation on changing recycling boxes to wheelie bins has now closed, with a large response rate. Around two thirds of respondents were in favour of the change, but more time is needed to investigate ways to address the concerns of people with less storage space. I joined CYC waste staff at four of the in-person drop ins where we listened carefully. There is no one size fits all waste service, and housing type doesn't necessarily correlate with need. We have single occupiers and people who generate very little recycling waste living both in large, detached houses and our inner-city terraces, who currently only use one box a month or less. We also have large families in both housing types who need the much greater capacity that the wheelie bins would provide.

It is also important to think of our staff's well-being; we continue to break records for heat, and we know that this is the least extreme weather we will see in our lifetimes. This highlights the need to make a physically demanding job easier where we can.

Hazel Court Booking System

Surveys from users of the new system three months in show an overwhelmingly positive experience:

- 86% of users satisfied - 71% of users are very satisfied and a further 15% fairly satisfied with the overall booking experience;
- An even higher 92% satisfaction rate for the on-site visit itself, with 82% very satisfied and 10% fairly satisfied;
- More than 8 in 10 residents (83%) report spending less time waiting to enter the site compared to previous visits;
- Local businesses report high satisfaction and ask for the trial to be made permanent.

Attendance figures for March are down in comparison to March 2025 but pick up in April. This is not necessarily surprising or negative; new systems take time for people to get used to, and anecdotally people have reported that they are planning better, making fewer trips but filling their car up before booking a slot. All data and feedback will be kept

under review, and longer-term data is needed to fully understand the impact.

Purple Flag – York recognised as one of the UK’s safest and most welcoming evening destinations for the fifth consecutive year

York’s continued success in securing the Purple Flag award is a fantastic achievement and a real testament to the strength of our city centre partnership. We have outstanding local businesses, hospitality venues and a dynamic York BID, and their hard work together with North Yorkshire Police, community organisations and council teams help ensure York remains a safe, welcoming and vibrant place to enjoy an evening out. This award reflects the hard work and care that goes into building a diverse evening economy with a strong focus on safety and inclusivity.

Other events

- I took part in the York BID rejuvenation day in March, this time focussing on Kings Staith, and the area in front of the Magistrates Court, which now boasts new shiny black paint.
- Hosted a screening of the National Emergency Briefing, a stark reminder of how climate change impacts us now and in the immediate future and the opportunities that remain – thanks to the Yorkshire Museum Trust for the warm welcome and use of their magnificent Tempest Anderson Hall.
- Rivers Trial Festival of Ideas Event – public engagement on OuseWem - illustrating how flood resilience and natural flood management can support people, wildlife and place
- Took part in the Paddle Out Protest for improved water quality. Following our motion to Full Council on Tackling Pollution in York’s Rivers, a report on the council’s and Yorkshire Water’s actions is going to July’s Place Scrutiny meeting
- Took part in the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust organised 30 by 30 event – galvanising partnership work towards managing 30% of land for nature recovery by 2030.
- Took part in a panel on water quality with Prof Alastair Boxall and Luke Charters MP, organised by Luke Charters.

- Took part in the Youth Environment Conference at the University of York STEM centre in June, organised by Rachael Maskell MP.

Executive Member for Economy and Culture, Councillor Pete Kilbane

LNER Community Stadium

Since we came into office in 2023, it has been so rewarding to witness the success of the teams playing out of the council owned Community Stadium. The Knights and Valkyries continue to play Rugby League at the highest level, and it was such a pleasure to celebrate York City's rightful return to the English Football League. It was fantastic to host the victory parade through the city centre to celebrate the club's success. What a joyous occasion it was and let us hope the club and the city enjoy similarly momentous days in the years ahead. Congratulations to all concerned. Thanks especially to everyone at the Council, and city partners, who pulled out all the stops to ensure the parade could happen at a time when organising such events is becoming increasingly difficult.

The success of our tenants has undoubtedly contributed to the Community Stadium reaching the milestone in June of more 1,000,000 tickets sold since it opened five years ago. But the professional teams are only part of the story. The stadium has also had significant community impact. From grassroots sport to inclusive events, the venue is a truly shared asset for residents. Its facilities have supported local clubs and schools, health and wellbeing initiatives, community programmes and outreach events and accessible sport and leisure opportunities.

So, it was with great pleasure that we were able to announce the renewal of our sponsorship arrangement with LNER, who continue to be excellent partners, and the extension of GLL's management contract. GLL, a not-for-profit social enterprise, has reinvested over £1m into the LNER York Community Stadium to improve the user experience and make long term savings, such as investing in solar panels with the support of our Labour Mayor and the Combined Authority. Our partnership with GLL has enabled York's Sports and Leisure Facilities to thrive. We do not always notice our successes. We should pause to congratulate all concerned as we continue to provide the residents of York with sports and leisure facilities that have been lost in other council

areas due to the overwhelming financial pressure on local authority budgets.

Summer in York

This month also saw the announcement of the “Summer in York: Bring your community to life” project. In partnership with Make it York, the initiative will enable residents to organise street parties, sports days or any event the community thinks would help bring people together. Assistance is available with event planning, promotion, safety and insurance along with toolkits for running inclusive, accessible events and access to funding to support event planning. At a time when powerful forces are seeking to divide us, it is more important than ever that we come together, get to know each other better and strengthen community bonds. I encourage all members to work with their residents and take advantage of this initiative. See www.makeityork.com/summerinyork for more details.

Cultural Passports

Finally, this month also saw the launch of Cultural Passports for Young People. This £460,000 fund will, over a three-year period, provide creative and cultural projects and experiences that engage young people. Targeting deprived areas across the region, this initiative locally originated from the then incoming Labour Administration’s Council Plan and is now fully funded by the Combined Authority. Organisations are encouraged to apply for up to £20,000 of funding for projects that will develop the health and wellbeing of young people through creativity and cultural enrichment while also increasing their aspiration and skillset to study and work in the sector.

**Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects,
Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion, Councillor Katie Lomas**

Budget Process

The continuing work of the Budget and MTFS Scrutiny Task and Finish Group has resulted in a series of meetings focussed on deeper understanding of each directorate and the budget pressures and opportunities. This cross-party work will enable us to investigate opportunities and proposals as they arise.

Separately we have a joint scrutiny task and finish group examining Adult Social Care budgets, to understand the pressures and identify ways to bring spending back in line with budgets despite the challenges of both increasing demand and cost and the Improvement Plan. Budgets remain under significant pressure, and I pay tribute to all those across the council working to deliver services despite these pressures.

Financial Inclusion

The migration to Universal Credit has produced some challenges for our work around financial support for some residents, mainly due to late or absent information being shared from DWP. This has resulted in a small number of errors which are being rectified as they are discovered. Any residents concerned about the support they are receiving, or any changes to their circumstances should contact the Council as soon as possible so that we can help.

To improve the way we manage Council Tax collection, we are involved in a pilot with the University of York to explore the impact of wording used in letters. We are also introducing text/digital reminders to support letters and ensure that we can offer support to anyone struggling to pay. July sees another York Talk Money campaign, offering advice, support and signposting across several partners in the city working together to provide as much help and support as we can during the continuing cost of living crisis. This coincides with the start of the summer holidays when we know many families struggle and we also have our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) scheme offering children who receive free school meals fun activities with meals and taking some pressure off family budgets.

Our teams continue to use the LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) data to target offers of help and support for households who might not be claiming all they are entitled to. This enables us to offer support to make claims for benefits but also to encourage people to apply for the funds that we administer through the Crisis and Resilience Funding from Government and our own funds.

Human Rights and Equalities Board (HREB)

HREB recently held a meeting to explore community cohesion, and we were grateful to have many guests attend to discuss recent issues and experiences and consider how we work together across the city to promote and support cohesion.

The Board is now preparing for our annual public meeting in September where we will consider the 2025 Indicator Report and the recommendations in it.

Equity Training

After the success of our Disability Equity Training, we are now planning more Equity Training for Council staff, using internal and low/no-cost partner resources. This will include ongoing disability equity training alongside anti-racism training and allyship training. We are working on other sources of training and training resources, using all our networks to minimise cost while maximising the impact for staff.

Major Projects

The current Station Frontage works are coming to an end. While the last stages have been disruptive to traffic of all types it is positive to see the new public spaces emerge. This incredibly complex project will deliver improvements for all using the spaces around the station front; however, they travel.

York Central has achieved some important milestones with more to come including the plans for the Wilton Rise Footbridge coming forward. York Central remains a hugely ambitious project that will deliver massive benefits for the city if we harness all the opportunities.

Residents recently had the opportunity to explore the final plans for the Castle Gateway scheme. These plans have been developed with a high level of engagement across the city and will offer a public space that offers people of all ages the chance to relax, come together, play, reflect and learn. The work means that all but Blue Badge parking spaces will be removed and work to improve the adjacent Coppergate Multi Storey Car Park will ensure that parking remains available and accessible 24/7.

Some of the major projects that were started or designed prior to 2023 have required significant work to address problems with the type of contracts used, out of date plans and costings that were not realistic. When I took over this role there was no formal governance process around major projects, no project or programme management infrastructure and no dedicated contract management resource.

Following the initial indications of difficulties with the Station Frontage project we instigated lessons learned exercises and later an internal audit report to uncover the problems that needed to be addressed. We have established appropriate governance structures, resourced project and programme management as well as contract management across the council. These functions might be seen as unnecessary or easy targets for budget savings, however we have seen the impact of their absence due to such decisions by previous administrations; risky contracts, overspends, financial liability we have no control over, and contract management coming way down on the list of priorities in the absence of dedicated resource.

Executive Member for Transport, Councillor Kate Ravilious

Rougier Route

This month Executive took the next step towards delivering a bus priority corridor through the heart of the city: the Rougier Route. Over 1,500 people responded to our public consultation on this scheme and we're hugely grateful to them for the local knowledge and lived experience that they shared. Subsequently, we have reshaped some elements of the scheme to reflect this valuable feedback, and we are now excited to move forward with an even stronger scheme that will bring huge benefits, not just to the way we travel around York, but also to the look and feel of some of our key city centre streets. We are now working towards having the Rougier Route operational in January 2027.

Parking Review

The findings from the independent review of parking were published and brought to the Place Scrutiny committee in June. Arup, the independent consultants did a fantastic job of listening to and recording the views of over 1000 people and assimilating these into a series of recommendations. I'd like to thank both City of York Council officers and Arup consultants for the huge amount of time that has gone into conducting a thorough review, and to all the people who took their time to share their views. We are now assessing the review recommendations and taking on board the useful feedback that came from Place Scrutiny committee, and we'll be bringing a final report with options to Executive in September.

Station Gateway

Phase two of the Station Gateway scheme is now nearly complete and it's looking fabulous. Finishing the phase signals the end of the highway disruption and we are grateful for everyone's patience over the last couple of years. It's great to see people enjoying the new open spaces, taking time to enjoy the new vistas, waiting in comfort at the spacious bus stops, crossing the road with ease at the new countdown crossing, and simply enjoying the feel of this transformed area. Work is already underway on some of the subsequent phases, and we are looking

forward to getting going on the bus turning loop: an element that will really complement the Rougier Route bus priority corridor.

Mayoral Active Travel Fund

Earlier this year we were delighted to be awarded over £1.2M from the Mayor's Active Travel fund. The successful projects include upgrades of the Knavesmire and Bootham Stray Active travel routes, and a package of measures to support healthier journeys to school and work across York. This comes after years of neglect of our active travel routes and constant cuts to the travel behavioural change team, and together with our budget commitment to upgrade the Clifton Backies active travel route and to employ public realm operatives to help maintain key active travel routes, this will start to reverse the decline and give more people confidence to walk, wheel and cycle all year round.

The Mayor's Active Travel Fund also included a Community Fund and it's great to see lots of brilliant local organisations being successful in their bids, including: York Cycle Campaign with their 'Pedal in the Park' initiative, York High School for a bike maintenance and active travel scheme, Acomb Primary School for covered bike storage and a bike library, Refugee Action York for a structured cycling pathway for refugees and asylum seekers, Bike Belles for Inclusive Cycling programmes for women, older adults and people with health conditions, Living Streets to deliver 'Stride by Stride York', supporting young women, girls and minority gender people aged 18–34 to walk and wheel more for everyday travel, Art of Protest to deliver Clifton Crossroads, a place-based active travel and wellbeing programme in Clifton, Lowfield Green Housing Co-op to create a permanent community bike repair workshop and cargo bike hub in Acomb, Get Cycling to deliver an inclusive, mobile cycling programme supporting disabled people, older adults and those facing health barriers, and St Nicks to improve access to a key walking and cycling route serving Tang Hall residents. The strength and breadth of the bids demonstrate the talent we have here in the city and the shared commitment to enable more people to benefit from walking, wheeling and cycling.

3 million £1 Young Person bus fares sold

In May I was delighted to join Mayor Skaith in celebrating over 3 million £1 young person's bus fares sold since the scheme's inception in September 2023. Bringing benefit to everyone under 19, the scheme has supported affordable travel across the entire York and North Yorkshire region and improved access to jobs, education and simply meeting up with friends.

Executive Member for Planning, Housing and Safer Communities,
Councillor Michael Pavlovic

Homelessness in York

As we approach the height of summer there are some things guaranteed; our sports teams will leave us sweating more than a heatwave, that we will complain whatever the weather is and sadly, that we will see an increase in people sleeping in doorways and tents around the city.

The summer months don't just have an influx of tourists coming to York, but also more people coming and sleeping rough. They come for a variety of reasons, some to beg or deal drugs, some because they are avoiding problems in their home areas, and some passing through because York is a nice place to visit.

The vast majority stay a few weeks and move on. Whatever the reason for coming, our Homeless Navigator team will work with them, to identify vulnerabilities, to offer temporary support and to help them to return to their home areas where possible.

During the past 12 months, the Navigator team made 600 interventions, many multiple interventions, issued 78 travel warrants, moved 6 long term homeless people into Housing First tenancies with a further five imminent, and are working with 42 clients who have moved from the streets into accommodation.

This Administration made a commitment in 2023, to do all we could to end rough sleeping for those we have a responsibility to accommodate, those with a local connection by May 2027. In June 2026, the number of York residents still sleeping rough was down to 4, and two of them are due to move into temporary accommodation shortly, the other two are not yet willing to leave the streets but our Navigator team will continue to work alongside them and offer all the support they can.

Neighbourhood Enforcement Team

Working closely alongside the Navigators are our Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers. Their role however extends far beyond the city centre and covers the whole city. Whether it is fly tipping, noise complaints, nuisance neighbours or antisocial behaviour, the NEO team will investigate, and it is always gratifying when we receive unsolicited compliments about their work.

In the last quarter alone, the team investigated 203 noise complaints, issued 116 noise warning letters and 4 noise abatement notices, 36 community protection warnings and 5 community protection notices, 45 interviews under caution, 4 notices to residents for pest damage, issued 12 Fixed Penalty Notices for waste disposal and public urination, undertook 2 dangerous dog and littering prosecutions and in July another 4 prosecutions for waste dumping, flyposting and keeping a dangerous dog will commence. The team that constantly goes above and beyond for our city is the NEO team.

Housing and Planning

In Housing, since the last Full Council, it has been confirmed that the Regulator of Social Housing has issued CYC with a C2 rating (1-4 scale) following an inspection earlier in the year.

They commended the partnership working across council departments, including the public realm teams, community caretakers and the work of the Local Area Coordinators. They also identified areas for improvement, particularly around communication with tenants and are working with the Housing team on an action plan to achieve C1 status by the time of the next inspection. We have already instigated new processes and procedures, reviewed several policies and brought issues to Scrutiny, and will continue to do so in the coming months.

In Planning, the teams are working with developers on several major projects, and the exciting news is that the York Central Reserved Matters application has been received and is being worked on with a view to bringing it before Planning Committee later this year. In addition to this,

several of the strategic sites are progressing and it promises to be a very busy time for all the planning officers, as well as for the city.