



City of York Council
Scrutiny Annual Report
2025-26





Foreword

Councillor Stephen Fenton
Chair, Corporate Scrutiny Committee

I am pleased to introduce this City of York Council Annual Scrutiny Report.

The review undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny made a number of recommendations for improvements in the way that Scrutiny works at the council, and in response an action plan was developed and approved by Full Council. A cross-party Working Group was established to oversee the implementation of the action plan, ably supported by officers from Democratic Services. Our focus has been on ensuring that Scrutiny can play a more active role in informing policy formulation and decision-making.

I believe that we have made a good start, building relationships between Scrutiny, the Executive and officers. I recognise that there is more work to do, for example to ensure that members have access to information in a timely manner to help plan the work of the three Scrutiny Committees – Corporate, People and Place.

Ultimately Scrutiny needs to be member-led in order to have real impact, and I'm grateful to Chairs, Vice Chairs and members who have put a lot of time and effort into their roles. One of our key roles is to amplify the voices and concerns of the public, so improving resident engagement and involvement in the work of Scrutiny – such as through Task and Finish Groups – will be a priority for the year ahead.

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Glossary

Call-In	A process by which Scrutiny may challenge or request reconsideration of decisions before they take effect.
CfGS	Centre for Governance and Scrutiny
Democratic Services	A Council function supporting the democratic and decision-making processes.
Executive	The group of councillors appointed by the Leader to take decisions on behalf of the Council.
LGA	Local Government Association
MTFS	Medium Term Financial Strategy
Pre-decision scrutiny	Scrutiny of an item or report by Scrutiny Members before a decision is made on it by the Council's Executive.
TFG	Task and Finish Group – a cross-party group set up to review a topic and make recommendations to drive forward improvements.

What is Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny (usually referred to just as ‘Scrutiny’) is a core element of the Council’s governance structure, helping to ensure effective democratic accountability, support robust decision-making, and enhance public service delivery.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees were established in English and Welsh local authorities by the Local Government Act 2000, to ensure that elected members who were not part of the executive could hold the executive to account for the decisions and actions that affect their communities.

Councillors who are members of Scrutiny Committees can propose policy changes, suggest improvements, commend good practice and take a leadership role on issues of concern in local communities.

In line with the nationally-agreed ‘Four Principles of Good Scrutiny’, Scrutiny aims to:

- provide constructive “critical friend” challenge to the Council’s Executive;
- amplify residents’ voices and concerns;
- be led by independent minded people who take responsibility for their role;
- drive improvement in public services.

Government guidance on Scrutiny can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-combined-authorities-and-combined-county-authorities/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-combined-authorities-and-combined-county-authorities>

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS): <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/>

Scrutiny in York

City of York Council has three Scrutiny Committees:

- **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
- **People Scrutiny Committee**
- **Place Scrutiny Committee**

The **Corporate Scrutiny Committee** acts as the Council's statutory scrutiny committee, managing and supporting the work of the Scrutiny Committees. It has responsibility for considering **Call-In** requests where it reviews evidence relating to decisions made by the Executive.

Each committee coordinates its own work programme and assists in developing policy by undertaking pre-decision scrutiny and carrying out in-depth reviews of selected topics, usually through Task and Finish Groups. Committees may seek the advice of expert advisers, conduct surveys and research, and subject to budget availability, undertake any work reasonably necessary to inform their deliberations.

The Scrutiny function is supported by a Scrutiny Officer and by the wider Democratic Services team.

The role and function of Scrutiny is set out in Article 8 of the Council's Constitution, which can be found here:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s188682/08%20-%20Article%208%20-%20Scrutiny.pdf>

Scrutiny at York in 2025-26 by Numbers

3

Scrutiny Committees

27

Scrutiny Members

21

Public meetings

45

Topic items

1

Call-in

25

Public Participants

4

Active Task and Finish Groups

20

Task and Finish meetings

2

Task and Finish reports

4

Scrutiny Member Briefing
Sessions

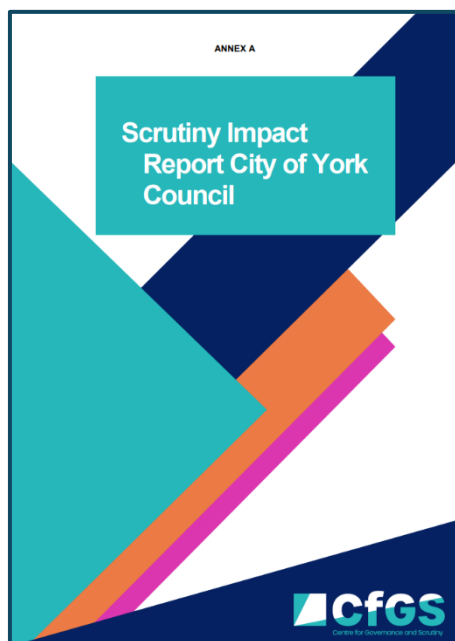
Transforming Scrutiny at City of York Council

The 2025/26 municipal year has seen a significant amount of work undertaken to develop and enhance the Council's Scrutiny function and better enable it to make a positive impact for the citizens of York.

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Review

A Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge of the Council undertaken in early 2024 concluded that:

'Scrutiny arrangements at CYC would benefit from review. As a function of governance, it can be hugely beneficial for quality of decision-making if it is fully supported and empowered to be a positive and integral part of policy development. It is clear that this is recognised by the administration as an area where a fresh look at how improvements can be made would also be a good use of time and effort.'



In response, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) was commissioned to undertake a Scrutiny Impact Review of the Council. The review was conducted in November and December 2024. The CfGS found that while there was a desire and commitment to make Scrutiny work, the majority of views shared were negative about the current impact and approach of Scrutiny. Its report, issued in January 2025, made twelve recommendations aimed at improving the organisational commitment, clarity of purpose, and impact of Scrutiny in York, seeking to foster good relationships and enable elected Members to lead effectively.

The full report and recommendations of the CfGS can be found at:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s182228/Annex%20A%20York%20Scrutiny%20Impact%20Report.pdf>

Eleven of the twelve recommendations, along with an action plan to implement them, were supported by the Council's Executive and then endorsed by Council on 27 March 2025. Decision details can be found at:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s182230/Executive%20part%20B%20minute%2011%20March%202025.pdf>

The action plan as agreed by Council can be found at:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s182229/Annex%20B%20Scrutiny%20Impact%20Review%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

For further details and an account of the review process, see also:

<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/case-study/review-of-scrutiny-at-city-of-york-council/>

Scrutiny Review Working Group

A cross-party Scrutiny Review Working Group (SRWG) was established in April 2025 to oversee work to implement the recommendations. Its membership initially consisted of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the four former scrutiny committees, with Cllr Stephen Fenton as Chair and Cllr Dave Merrett as Vice-Chair. Following the introduction of the revised Scrutiny committee structure in May 2025, new Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs who were not already members of the SRWG were co-opted to its membership.

The Scrutiny Review Working Group has held ten meetings during the year, working on a range of areas developing the structures to support the revised approach to Scrutiny at the Council. This has included developing a new Executive-Scrutiny Protocol and Shared Vision for Scrutiny in York, as set out below, as well as leading on the introduction of informal scrutiny briefing sessions and the reintroduction of an annual scrutiny report.

New Committee Structure

In response to the recommendations, with the approval of the Council's Executive a new Scrutiny Committee structure was introduced in May 2025, better aligned to reflect council business, with the previous four Scrutiny Committees (Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management; Children, Culture and Communities; Economy, Place, Access and Transport; Health, Housing and Adult Social Care) being reduced to three: Corporate, People, and Place. Each Committee has nine Members and meets on a bi-monthly basis rather than monthly as previously, in-keeping with the CfGS recommendation that fewer formal meetings would reduce the number of 'information only' items on Committee agendas and allow greater scope for other channels of Scrutiny activity to be developed.

Task and Finish Groups

This includes a shift in focus to conducting more Scrutiny through Task and Finish Groups, which report back to their 'parent' Committee, with the aim of undertaking in-depth work on areas where Scrutiny can have a tangible impact. Membership of TFGs is not restricted to Scrutiny Members; any elected Member with the interest, expertise and knowledge of the topic to be scrutinised may be appointed. Full details of Task and Finish Group work across the year can be found later in this report.

Executive-Scrutiny Protocol and Shared Vision for Scrutiny

As part of work towards fulfilment of the CfGS recommendations, the SRWG developed a Shared Vision for Scrutiny in York document, and a refreshed Executive-Scrutiny Protocol for City of York Council, both of which were agreed with the Leader and Deputy Leader in July 2025.

The Shared Vision aims to support and develop clarity over the role of scrutiny, and foster a robust organisational culture acknowledging and valuing the role of scrutiny in enhancing accountability and decision-making through collaboration and constructive challenge.

Following agreement from Council, the **Executive-Scrutiny Protocol** was incorporated into the Council's Constitution on 18 September. It can be found here: <https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s185267/Annex%20B%20-%20Executive%20Scrutiny%20Protocol.pdf>

The **Shared Vision for Scrutiny in York** sits as a 'live' document in the charge of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, and can be found here:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s185266/Annex%20A%20-%20Shared%20Vision%20for%20Scrutiny%20in%20York.pdf>

Officer support

A Scrutiny Officer was appointed in August 2025 to lead on work across a range of areas including supporting task and finish group work, establishing a systematic approach to recommendation tracking, building relationships with officers, and working to raise the profile of the scrutiny function.

As part of work to develop best practice and showcase the progress made, the Scrutiny Officer has represented the Council at the CfGS Annual Conference in March 2026 and has joined the National Scrutiny Officers' Network.

Scrutiny Member Briefing Sessions

Under the Council's new Scrutiny arrangements, topics which would previously have been presented to a formal committee meeting as an information report with a recommendation 'to note' can instead be presented at an informal scrutiny member briefing session. These briefing sessions are for Members to receive information, and are held in addition to, not in place of, public meetings, for the purpose of developing Members' understanding of particular topics. Items on which Members' views are sought should be considered at a formal public committee meeting, rather than at an informal private briefing.

Four informal Briefing Sessions were held during 2025/26:

- 21 October 2025: York Library Service Assessment of Need
- 4 December 2025: Healthy Weight, and Capital Project Management
- 26 February 2026: Digital Switchover
- 15 April 2026: School Attendance/Attainment Gap, and York Community Woodland

Attendance for each session has been around 15-20 Members and feedback to date has been positive from both Members and officers. The first session for the 2026/27 municipal year will focus on changes to the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB). Lisa Pope, Director of Commissioning and Partnerships at York and North Yorkshire ICB, and Peter Roderick, Director of Public Health at CYC, have been invited to update members on the latest position.

Scrutiny Training and Development

A training session for Members on 'Best Practice Scrutiny – Training for Councillors' with trainer David McGrath, was held on 19 February 2026. This covered a range of areas including: the role and purpose of Scrutiny - linked to members' purpose and role as a councillor; rules and reference points; key outcomes, with case studies; questioning strategies; and assessing and improving the effective use of committee time. Just under twenty Members attended, and feedback received has been generally positive.

Ongoing Member training and development around Scrutiny will be considered by the Member Development and Training Working Group.

Tracking progress

At its meeting on 2 March, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee agreed a suggested approach to tracking recommendations made by Scrutiny to Executive. A tracker will be maintained and updated by Democratic Services and, as is already the case with Council Motions and Petitions. The Committee will receive updates twice a year, starting in autumn 2026.

A 'traffic light system' will be used by the Committee to assess the level of progress made against each of the recommendations and decide whether any further scrutiny activity is required. As part of this work Members have requested that a review of Scrutiny recommendations made since the start of the current administration is undertaken by the Scrutiny Officer, for inclusion on the tracker where appropriate.

Summary of progress against CfGS recommendations, July 2026

To date eight of the eleven recommendations agreed by Council have been implemented, with work continuing the other three, as set out in the table below.

	Recommendations*	Implemented
1	The Council should work to develop a shared vision and understanding of Scrutiny.	September 2025
2	The Council should employ a dedicated Scrutiny officer.	August 2025
3	<i>Substitute members of committees should be limited in number and named individuals, rather than allowing any Cllr to act as a substitute at any given time.</i>	Not adopted
4	Revisit and refresh the Cabinet/Scrutiny protocol.	September 2025
5	Scrutiny taking a more deliberate and planned approach to budget scrutiny throughout the year. This should include a focus upon service delivery beyond finances.	Ongoing
6	Review and enhance the scrutiny work planning process – supporting a Member-led work plan.	Ongoing
7	Undertake policy development in the form of task groups.	From May 2025
8	That the Council consider reviewing the alignment of committees to better reflect the business of the Council.	From May 2025
9	That the frequency of Scrutiny Committee meetings be reviewed with a view to having fewer formal meetings, but developing scope for greater focus, preparation, including briefings and review work.	From May 2025
10	Introduce a formal process to track recommendations that Scrutiny makes.	March 2026
11	Reinstate the process of having an annual scrutiny report but update the format to focus on the impact and difference that scrutiny has made.	July 2026
12	A programme of ongoing training for members in undertaking good scrutiny, which could include work programming as well as coaching for chairs.	Ongoing

* The table presents an abridged version of the recommendations; full details of each can be found at:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s182228/Annex%20A%20York%20Scrutiny%20Impact%20Report.pdf>

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Cllr Stephen Fenton

Vice-Chair:

Cllr Dave Merrett



Membership 2025/26:

Cllr Nigel Ayre, Cllr Anna Baxter, Cllr Jo Coles, Cllr Stephen Fenton, Cllr Dave Merrett, Cllr Anna Perrett (from Feb. 2026), Cllr Kallum Taylor, Cllr Richard Watson, Cllr Margaret Wells (to Feb. 2026) and Cllr Paula Widdowson.

- Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting details, minutes and agendas:
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=1117>
- Webcasts of Corporate Scrutiny Committee:
<https://www.york.gov.uk/webcasts-1/webcasts-corporate-scrutiny-committee>

As the Council's statutory scrutiny committee, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for overseeing and supporting the work of all three Scrutiny Committees, monitoring progress against petitions received and motions approved by Council, and scrutiny of a range of areas including finance, major capital projects, Customer Services, Digital and ICT, and Climate Change.

During 2025/26 it held eight Committee meetings, including regular reporting on Council motions and petitions, major projects including York Station Gateway and the Castle and Eye Project, Business Sustainability, Communications Strategy, and a number of items relating to the revision of Scrutiny arrangements. It also received two final reports of Task and Finish Groups, in relation to the Boundary Commission Review of Council Size, and Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy; further details of Task and Finish Groups are set out later in this report.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee Meetings 2025/26

Date	Scrutiny item	Detail
<u>9 June 2025</u>	Major Projects - York Station Gateway and York Outer Ring Road	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Budget Setting Process	Task and Finish Group
<u>7 July 2025</u>	Harewood Whin Green Energy Park	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy Scrutiny, Task and Finish Group	Task and Finish Group
	Boundary Commission Electoral Review - Council Size, Task and Finish Group	Task and Finish Group
<u>8 Sept. 2025</u>	10-year Anti-Poverty Strategy	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Next steps for securing investment in York: the York Prospectus	
	2024/25 Finance and Performance Outturn	Annual Update
	A Shared Vision for Scrutiny in York	Scrutiny Management
<u>1 Oct. 2025</u>	Major Projects - Castle and Eye Project	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	City of York Council's Size Submission - report to the Boundary Commission, Phase One, October 2025	Task and Finish Group
<u>10 Nov. 2025</u>	Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvements Report April 2024 - March 2025	Annual Update
	Climate Change Audit Report 2025	
	Monitoring and Tracking of Approved Council Motions	Six-monthly Update
	Process to respond to Council Motions	Scrutiny Management
	Petitions Schedule	Six-monthly Update
<u>19 Jan. 2026</u>	Draft Report of the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy Task and Finish Group	Task and Finish Group
	Business Sustainability Programme	

<u>2 March 2026</u>	Scrutiny Recommendation Tracking	Scrutiny Management
<u>11 May 2026</u>	Monitoring and Tracking of Approved Council Motions	Six-monthly Update
	Schedule of Petitions	Six-monthly Update



Corporate Scrutiny Committee, 3 March 2026

Call-In

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for considering Call-In requests. One Call-In meeting was held during the 2025-26 municipal year, in relation to a key decision of the Executive made on 14 April 2026 in relation to the Housing Delivery Programme Delivery Strategy. This decision was called in by Cllr Nigel Ayre, Cllr Andrew Hollyer and Cllr Derek Wann.

A Call-In meeting was held on [5 May 2026](#). With four Members finding there had been a breach, and five Members finding there had not been a breach, the Call-In fell and the original decision made by Executive, which had been paused, was released for implementation.

People Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Cllr Jane Burton

Vice-Chair:

Cllr Andrew Waller



Membership 2025/26:

Cllr Jane Burton, Cllr Tony Clarke (to Feb. 2026), Cllr Ian Cuthbertson, Cllr Ashley Mason, Cllr John Moroney, Cllr Emily Nelson, Cllr Danny Myers (from Feb. 2026), Cllr Michael Nicholls, Cllr Carol Runciman and Cllr Andrew Waller.

- People Scrutiny Committee meeting details, minutes and agendas:
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=1120>
- Webcasts of People Scrutiny Committee:
<https://www.york.gov.uk/webcasts-1/webcasts-people-scrutiny-committee>

The People Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for scrutinising Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Housing and Homelessness, and Public Health, as well as scrutiny of health service partners. During 2025/26 it held six Committee meetings, providing scrutiny of a number of topics including SEND Strategy, the emerging Neighbourhood Model, and Housing Tenancy Policy, including a focus on Adult Social Care items in the later part of the municipal year following the Care Quality Commission's assessment of the Council, as well as a number of pre-decision Scrutiny items.

'It was really helpful to have scrutiny committee support for the Carers Strategy, raising awareness of caring in York and the support that is available to people who have a caring role'.

Sara Storey, Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Integration

People Scrutiny Committee Meetings 2025/26

Date	Scrutiny item	Detail
<u>11 June 2025</u>	Work Planning	
<u>9 July 2025</u>	York Inclusion and Belonging Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-2030	
<u>8 October 2025</u>	Neighbourhood Model	
	Adult Social Care Strategy	
	York Learning 2024-2025 Strategic Plan Performance	Annual Update
<u>3 December 2025</u>	York Hungry Minds - Free School Meal Pilot Update	
	Early Years and Childcare Reforms	
	Housing Tenancy Policy and Strategy and City of York Living Rent	Pre-decision Scrutiny
<u>17 March 2026</u>	Care Quality Commission Local Authority Assessment	
	York Carers Strategy 2026-2032	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	2026/27 Ward Funding Allocations	Pre-decision Scrutiny
<u>15 April 2026</u>	City Of York Safeguarding Adults Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2024/25	Annual Update



People Scrutiny Committee, 3 December 2025

Place Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Cllr Danny Myers

(from Feb. 2026)

Cllr Ben Burton

(June-Dec. 2025)



Vice-Chair:

Cllr Paul Healey

Membership 2025/26:

Cllr Anna Baxter (to Feb. 2026), Cllr Ben Burton (to Dec. 2025), Cllr Tony Clarke (from Feb. 2026), Cllr Stephen Fenton, Cllr Paul Healey, Cllr Anne Hook, Cllr Danny Myers, Cllr Kallum Taylor, Cllr Christian Vassie, Cllr Margaret Wells (from Feb. 2026) and Cllr Conrad Whitcroft.

- Place Scrutiny Committee meeting details, minutes and agendas:
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=1122>
- Webcasts of Place Scrutiny Committee:
<https://www.york.gov.uk/webcasts-1/webcasts-place-scrutiny-committee>

The Place Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for scrutinising areas including Transport Regulatory Services, Public Realm, Waste, Economic Strategy, Culture and Libraries. During 2025/26 it held six Committee meetings, providing scrutiny of topics including Parks Investment, Household Waste Recycling, the Neighbourhood Caretakers scheme, and Electric Vehicle Charging and Property Asset Management Strategies.

‘On the pre scrutiny around ward funding the additional recommendation to publish ward funded spend detail/projects on CYC’s ward pages was a great addition, was approved by Executive and has already been implemented’.

Pauline Stuchfield, Director of Communities

Place Scrutiny Committee Meetings 2025/26

Date	Scrutiny item	Detail
<u>24 June 2025</u>	Parks Investment Fund	Pre-decision Scrutiny
<u>23 Sept. 2025</u>	Parks Investment Fund	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Household Waste Recycling Centre Operations	
<u>25 Nov. 2025</u>	Community Transport Study Proposal (Dial and Ride)	
	Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy	
<u>26 Jan. 2026</u>	Asset Management Strategy - 2026 to 2031	Pre-decision Scrutiny
<u>24 March 2026</u>	Rougier Route: Improving Bus Reliability in York City Centre	
	Local Transport Strategy Update	
<u>19 May 2026</u>	Neighbourhood Caretakers Development and Update	
	Task and Finish Group Proposal: Section 106 Agreements Process Improvements	Task and Finish Group



Place Scrutiny Committee, 23 September 2025

Task and Finish Groups

Following Recommendation 7 of the CfGS review to undertake policy development in the form of task groups, more emphasis has been placed in 2025/26 in conducting in-depth Scrutiny work in the form of Task and Finish Groups (TFGs).

A total of seven TFGs were established across the course of the municipal year, although only four of these were active during the year itself. Two TFGs have issued final reports. Details of each TFG are set out below.

Boundary Review Task and Finish Group

Members: Cllr Dave Merrett (Chair), Cllr Jo Coles, Cllr Andrew Hollyer, Cllr Chris Steward, and Cllr Derek Wann.

Reporting to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. This Group has now concluded its work in developing the Council's submission on Council Size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). Group meetings were held 18 August, 1 September, 17 September and 23 September. The Group's report was endorsed unanimously by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 1 October, and then agreed at an Extraordinary Council meeting held on 16 October ahead of submission to the LGBCE on 17 October.

The final report of this Group, as agreed by Council, can be found here:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s185888/Final%20V5%20Boundary%20Commission%20Submission.pdf>

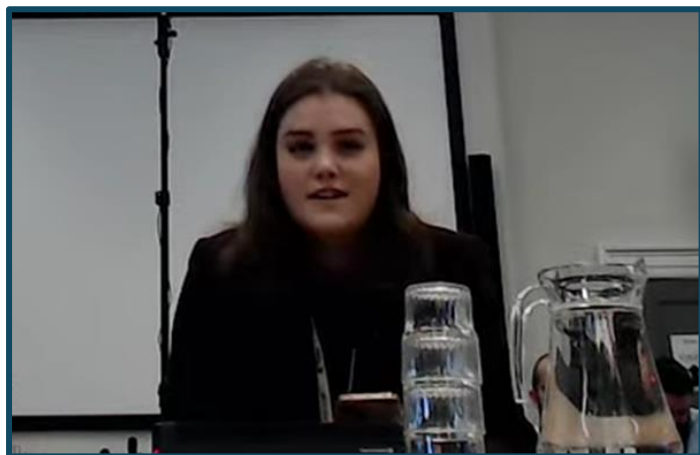
The Corporate Scrutiny Committee agreed on 11 May to re-establish this TFG to consider the new ward boundaries proposed by LGBCE. The Group is due to meet in June 2026, and is expected to submit its report to Corporate Scrutiny and then, if the Committee agrees to endorse it, Council in July 2026.

Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy Task and Finish Group

Members: Cllr Anna Baxter (Chair), Cllr Nigel Ayre, Cllr Anne Hook, and Cllr John Moroney.

Reporting to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. The Committee agreed to establish a TFG to explore the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy at its June 2025 meeting, in part in response to the recommendation of CfGS to that Scrutiny should take '*a more deliberate and planned approach to budget scrutiny throughout the year*'. The TFG's remit was agreed by the Committee in July 2025.

Group meetings were then held on 4 September, 6 October, 3 November and 10 November 2025, and 5 January 2026. The Group's final report contained seven recommendations relating to ongoing Budget scrutiny, the Budget-setting process, Adult Social Care, Member training and development, communications and engagement, and tracking progress. These were agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 17 January and then endorsed unanimously by Executive at its meeting on 3 March. This was the first TFG to present recommendations to Executive under the new arrangements.



Cllr Anna Baxter presents the Group's report and recommendations to Executive, 3 March 2026.

The final report of this Group can be found here:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s187596/Item%20%20-%20Report%20of%20the%20Budget%20and%20Medium%20Term%20Financial%20Strategy%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20-%20Annex%20A.pdf>

The Group's report has been included in the CfGS Scrutiny Review Library here: <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/scrutiny-reviews/>

This TFG has been re-established with the same membership for the new budget cycle and met on 16 March to consider next steps. Further meetings were held on 13 April, 11 May and 18 May, with a series of interview sessions with Executive Members and senior officers to consider Budget issues relating to each Council Directorate scheduled for June and July 2026.

Changes to Welfare Benefits Task and Finish Group

Members: Cllr Stephen Fenton (Chair), Cllr Jane Burton, Cllr Jo Coles, Cllr Carol Runciman, and Cllr Chris Steward.

Reporting to the People Scrutiny Committee. This TFG originated with Corporate Scrutiny Committee (CSC), following a Council resolution passed on 27 March 2025; full details can be found at

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s183012/Annex%20A%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Proposal%20v0.3.pdf>

Group meetings have been held 15 July, 19 August, 16 September and 1 October 2025. Work then paused pending further details on changes to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) expected in 2026. To date the Group has consulted with representatives of a number of organisations, including the Financial Inclusion Steering Group, the Welfare Benefits Unit, and Citizens Advice York.

Work re-commenced in May 2026; TFG members are considering an interim report and recommendations, ahead of a planned final report to be issued after the Timms Review Personal Independence Payment (PIP) has reported, likely to be in autumn 2026.

Adult Social Care Finance Joint Task and Finish Group

Members: Cllr Michael Nicholls (Chair), Cllr Nigel Ayre, Cllr Jane Burton, Cllr John Moroney, and Cllr Carol Runciman.

Reporting to the Corporate and People Scrutiny Committees (the former is this TFG's 'parent' committee). This TFG was established following both Committee's agreement to the recommendation of the Budget and MTFS TFG to '*establish a standing joint Task and Finish Group to review the financial challenges within Adult Social Care on a regular basis.*' A scoping meeting was held on in

April and the TFG's remit was agreed, with further meeting scheduled in June and July 2026.

Food Insecurity Task and Finish Group

Members: Cllr Emilie Knight and Cllr Emily Nelson

Reporting to the People Scrutiny Committee. This TFG originated following a Council resolution in July 2023 and previously reported to the former Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee. Initial investigative work has concluded and a draft report is now in preparation, with the aim of final recommendations being presented to Committee in September 2026.

Housing Repairs Task and Finish Group

Members: Cllr Andrew Waller, Cllr Ashley Mason, Cllr Anna Perrett, Cllr Jason Rose, and Cllr Chris Steward.

Reporting to the People Scrutiny Committee. The Committee agreed to establish a TFG in response to concerns over tenant satisfaction with the Council's repairs service. A scoping meeting was held in April 2026 with a more detailed remit due to be reported to the committee in July 2026, with fieldwork, including meetings with residents' associations, expected to begin over summer 2026.

Section 106 Agreements Process Improvements Task and Finish Group

Members: Cllr Chris Steward, Cllr Dave Merrett, Cllr Keith Orrell, and Cllr Christian Vassie.

Reporting to the Place Scrutiny Committee. This TFG's remit was agreed by the Committee 19 May 2026 and follows a September 2025 Council Motion around planning process improvements. Details can be found at:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s189235/Task%20and%20Finish%20Proposal%20s106.pdf>

Consultation with the Council's auditors Veritau has taken place with a view to ensuring this work complements rather than duplicates Veritau's audit of the Section 106 process. This TFG is due to hold its first meeting in July 2026.

Looking Ahead

The emphasis in 2025/26 has been on establishing the mechanisms and structures to strengthen Scrutiny at York and enable it to more effectively ensure democratic accountability, support good decision making, and enhance service delivery. While progress has been made, there is still work to do to achieve the shared vision of a Member-led Scrutiny function which is held in high regard by its partners and stakeholders, and which will make a positive impact for the citizens of York.

Member Survey

A Member survey was carried out during May and June 2026, aimed at gathering feedback on the first year of operation of the new scrutiny arrangements, with a view to informing work to further improve Scrutiny over the year ahead. Member responses covered a range of Scrutiny activity, noting improvements whilst highlighting a number of areas where work remains to be done.

In particular, there were generally positive responses to the new Scrutiny Member Briefing Sessions, while responses around Task and Finish work tended to more tentative; with an increasing amount of TFG work now underway, it should be possible gather more substantive feedback on this aspect of Scrutiny later in the new municipal year. Work planning was identified as an area of weakness, including several comments around the need for a more fully developed Executive Forward Plan to enable more effective work programming and timely pre-decision scrutiny, alongside continuing work to communicate the changes to Scrutiny effectively.

Members were also asked to provide a score from 1 to 5 for how effectively they considered particular aspects of the new arrangements. In assessing the effectiveness of Scrutiny at York overall, responses to the CfGS review in late 2024 (using the same scoring system) averaged 2.12; the average of 2.67 from responses to the 2026 survey compares favourably and suggests progress has been made.

Member Survey, average score:

How effective do you feel the new Scrutiny arrangements have been over the last year? (1 = ineffective; 5 = very effective)

2.67

Ambitions for 2026/27

The Scrutiny Review Working Group retains a watching brief over ongoing work to improve Scrutiny, and having carefully considered feedback from a recent Member survey, has identified a number of ambitions to further embed the new approach and continue to improve Scrutiny at York in the year ahead.

- **Task and Finish Work:** To further embed the new approach to conducting detailed Scrutiny work through Task and Finish work and encourage more Members to participate.
- **Pre-Decision Scrutiny:** To seek to conduct more Scrutiny work in advance of decisions to enable Members to provide more meaningful input into decisions made by the Executive; and to work with officers to develop a clearer distinction in how pre-decision items (i.e. where Scrutiny is effectively considering a final draft of a decision report) are classified, as against providing input into policy development at an early stage.
- **Committee Work:** To further embed a focus on meaningful items where Scrutiny can have an impact; including fewer single-item agendas and fewer information-only reports. A reduced number of the latter should allow for more of Members' time to be spent scrutinising substantive items, and participating in in-depth Task and Finish work.
- **Briefing Sessions:** To develop a more rigorous approach to ensuring that information-only items, where Scrutiny Members' views are not being sought, are reported to informal briefing sessions, rather than formal public Committee meetings.
- **Work Planning:** To develop a more systematic approach to work planning in order to identify and prioritise agenda items, key lines of enquiry and potential impact.
- **Health Scrutiny:** To develop a more systematic approach to Scrutiny of Health, seeking to work with partners to enable constructive scrutiny of local health services.
- **Executive Forward Plan:** To work closely with CfGS to develop a more detailed and planned Executive Forward Plan, so that Scrutiny can have sight of issues in sufficient time to meaningfully contribute.

Get Involved in Scrutiny

Our public participation scheme encourages residents to attend meetings and participate. You can come along and observe any public Scrutiny meeting or arrange to contribute to the debate and express your views by registering to speak; find out how to have your say.

<https://www.york.gov.uk/AttendCouncilMeetings>

York residents can suggest possible topics for review either through public participation at a Scrutiny meeting, or by contacting the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee. For more information contact Democratic Services by email: democratic.services@york.gov.uk

<https://www.york.gov.uk/performance-policies/overview-scrutiny>

