
Place Scrutiny Committee

21st July 2026

Head of Highway Asset Management

York's Water Network – a health check

Summary

1. Members of scrutiny have requested a report to consider the management of our cities 'water network':
 - Report on health of the watercourses and sewage management and infrastructure and insight into the current partnership and investment to improve water quality
2. Annex 1 of the report provides a Council review and update on all matters (with particular regard to the Council's collaborative work with Yorkshire Water and Ousewem)
3. Annex 2 provides an update from Yorkshire Water on river health, Combined Sewer Overflows and Wastewater Network, partnership working, Integrated Water Management Planning, Bathing Water Designation and Regulatory Review of the Water Sector
4. Annex's 3 and 4 are an update from the Environment Agency on their roles and responsibilities with regards to regulating activities in relation to water quality.

Members of scrutiny to consider and identify any further recommendations that should be made to investigate the issues further or influence City of York Council or partners actions.

Recommendations

5. The Committee is asked to:

- 1) consider the detail of the report and it's annex(s) and identify any further recommendations that should be made to investigate the issues further or influence City of York Council or partners actions

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

Background

6. The management of drainage networks across our city relies upon the actions and investment from a wide range of partners. In many cases these responsibilities are long standing and are underpinned by a number of different legislative sources bestowing powers and duties on organisations or landowners.
7. City of York Council acts in numerous roles to manage our existing drainage infrastructure – Lead Local Flood Authority, Highways Authority and as a landowner. The Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water and Internal Drainage Boards all manage and maintain drainage assets within the City of York Council area.
8. The drainage in new and redeveloped sites is regulated through the planning process, the council as a Local Planning Authority works with a range of internal and external consultees to ensure an effective drainage strategy is in place that will benefit the inhabitants of the site and it's neighbours.
9. Annex 1 of this report provides an overview of the key issues and the work of all partners to contribute to the cleanliness of our waterways and the effectiveness of our drainage systems.
10. Annexes 2,3 and 4 provide a written submission from Yorkshire Water and the Environment Agency respectively to provide additional details on their roles and responsibilities.

Consultation

11. Ongoing consultation with all partners is undertaken through the range of actions detailed in Annex 1:

- a. Local Planning Authority consultations – Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water are statutory bodies in the planning process and are consulted in accordance with the potential impact that may arise within a development site. Internal Drainage Boards, although not a statutory consultee are widely consulted. Internal teams including Lead Local Flood Authority, Highways Regulation and frontline Highways and Public Realm teams are also consulted.
- b. City of York Council work closely with Yorkshire Water on the development of their strategies and their rolling 5 year investment plans. City of York Council have worked with the Yorkshire Leaders Board and Yorkshire Water to develop a process to allow local authorities to help form their new long-term-strategy and business plan.
- c. City of York Council officers and councillors sit on the board of the 4 Internal Drainage Boards that serve the city, all scrutinise and assess the work of the boards to ensure an effective approach is taken to manage our drainage systems.
- d. Highways drainage budgets are published annually and are scrutinised through the Executive Member for Highways Decision Session meetings, our approach to manage highway drainage assets is defined in our Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan and it's supporting guidance documents.

Options

- 12. The principal options open to the members of the Place Scrutiny Committee are to comment on and review the detail provided in this report and Annex's 1,2,3 and 4 and make recommendations for further investigation or to influence the actions of City of York council or partners.

Council Plan

- 13. Healthy rivers and an effective drainage system in our city will deliver a wide range of benefits and safeguard our communities from flood risk or environmental harm. City of York's Council Plan, One city for all, details 7 key priorities to be developed from 2023 through to 2027, the actions and programmes of work detailed in this report and its Annex deliver against the following priorities:

- a. A fair, thriving, green economy for all
- b. Sustainable, accessible transport for all
- c. Cutting carbon, enhancing the environment

Implications

14. This report and its annexes do not make any recommendations or changes to existing approaches or policies for City of York Council, our partners or our communities. As such no implications have been recorded below. Any recommendations from members of the Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee would be developed and taken through the appropriate governance processes with implications considered for all recommendations.

- **Financial**
None
- **Human Resources (HR)**
None
- **Equalities**
None
- **Legal**
None
- **Crime and Disorder**
None
- **Information Technology (IT)**
None
- **Property**
None

Risk Management

8. There are no known risks with the content of this report.

Contact Details

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Report
Approved



Date [13/07/2026]

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex 1 – City of York Council update on the Health of our Water Network Scrutiny Report

Annex 2 - Yorkshire Water Update on river health, Combined Sewer Overflows and Wastewater Network, Partnership Working, Integrated Water Management Planning, Bathing Water Designation and Regulatory Review of the Water Sector

Annex 3 – Environment Agency Regulatory Roles and Responsibilities

Annex 4 – Periodic Review Factsheet Updated 2026 AT