

Leader and Executive Report to Full Council, September 2026

Leader of the Council, Councillor Claire Douglas

Welcome and changes to Executive

I would like to welcome Councillors Anna Perrett and Dave Merrett (job share Housing, Planning and Safer Communities) to my Executive team. They join us as I say a substantial thank you to Councillor Michael Pavlovic as he steps back from the Housing, Planning and Safer Communities Executive Member role. Michael has brought many years of valuable experience of dealing with both housing and homelessness in York. He leaves a strong legacy in the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29 and significantly reducing the incidence of rough sleeping in our city. He is a tough act to follow but Anna and Dave bring many valuable skills and experiences across the portfolio area.

Our City, Our Community

The long school summer holidays and good weather have seen a range of excellent community events across our fine city. An opportunity for young people and families across the city to celebrate the hard work and determination shown by both GCSE and A Level students who sat exams over the summer period. Congratulations to everyone who participated and will now move onto the next chapter of their lives be that employment, apprenticeship, college, Sixth Form or university. We are very fortunate to have such excellent schools in our city.

I was honoured to be invited to attend the York Youth Festival at Rowntree Park that was planned, organised and run by the York Youth Council. They did a fantastic job, had a strong turn out and gave a voice to young people from across York through the organisations they participate in and help run and through their performing skills. We have a highly talented group of young people. A big thank you to the many who contribute so much to our city.

It was also great to see Dodsworth Area Residents Association host the first Family Fun Day on King George's Field. It was fantastic fun, the turnout was great and was a great show of the importance of bringing people together. This is just one example of the community based events that is made possible by the Summer in York: Bring your

community to life initiative. Thanks to the Council's Communities team and local residents for everything they do for our communities.

Yorkshire Day was celebrated on 1 August across our city, the York BID's Play area on Parliament Street and Make it York's Seaside Fun Zone are all excellent examples of partnership working with the Council to celebrate our city, the summer holidays and bring visitors and York residents into the city centre.

I also want to acknowledge the huge impact the water main burst in July had on the Leeman Road community. This was a shock to everyone and devastating for some. The repair and clean-up process was protracted and painful. Holgate ward councillors worked tremendously hard alongside their community to get the action needed to put the damage to streets, homes and public spaces right.

I continue to work with Yorkshire Water to push them to show more care and respect for our communities across the city when dealing with bursts, repairs and making good.

On other matters:

The York Pride in Place partnership, hosted by Aviva and designed to bring large employers across the city together to take action to improve the lives of our residents held its first public event in July. The emerging themes are working collectively to support young people to maximise their potential. There is so much to do across our city in this respect, and I look forward to continuing to work with the organisations to drive volunteer action and investment into our communities through this partnership.

I spoke at APSE's Northern Region event and AGM on the subject of Graffiti to Grime: Local Solutions for Cleaner, Safer Neighbourhoods. It was a delight to be able to champion the excellent work of the Council's Neighbourhood Caretakers and the positive impact the team are having on the upkeep of the public realm in communities and neighbourhoods across the city. The response of local residents and the sense of job satisfaction in the team are testament to this new way of working. Responding to community priorities in their areas and restoring pride in our places.

The annual University of York summer graduation dinner was a chance for partners across the city, students and University of York staff to say farewell to Professor Charlie Jeffery, Vice Chancellor. He has now taken

up a new post as Vice Chancellor of the University of Southampton. I'd like to thank him for his focus, determination and immense progress on better integrating the University into the daily fabric of our city. An outward looking Vice Chancellor with the vitality, wellbeing and opportunities for people living in York being a key focus of his work. I look forward to following the recruitment of his successor. This is a hugely important role in our city and one that I would like to see remain as an outward looking champion for our city and its people.

It was a pleasure to welcome Minister for Climate, Katie White OBE MP on a recent visit to both the York Minster precinct and Nestle. She was given a comprehensive tour of the industry leading climate mitigation and adaptation measures implemented at both sites. York is a strong front runner on solar panel, heating system and climate adaptation across organisations in our city. We are showing how important heritage buildings, public spaces such as leisure facilities and commercial spaces can contribute not only to reducing carbon in our atmosphere but improving the financial viability of organisations and the comfort and wellbeing for the people who work in and use the facilities.

York Central Development Update

Milestones: Phase 1 of the project is in the planning system and is due to be considered by planning committee on 10th September. The Phase 1 application includes 1,000 homes, public realm, the central park, the western station entrance, a hotel and substantial commercial space. The replacement, fully accessible pedestrian and cycle bridge at Wilton Rise and St Paul's Terrace has been approved through Planning Committee.

The scoping of the Government Property Agency (GPA) civil service hub to accommodate 2,600 civil servants continues and the integration of the GPA building with the planned innovation hub to create a Places for Growth campus on York Central continues.

Given the pace of progress with the project, I am calling on all associated partners and organisations to think deeply about how the benefits of the project can be fully realised and felt for generations to come by the current and future residents of our city. The realisation of good quality job opportunities, economic benefits affordable homes, well planned green, social and event space. This an exciting time for our city but we must get this right and can't underestimate the responsibility we all hold and must respond to.

York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA)

It has been excellent news to hear that the application process for YNYCA to become an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority has been successful. Over time this will give the authority the Right to Request additional powers and move towards an integrated settlement. It is fantastic to see the York and North Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan being considered by the Combined Authority on 11 September including the highly important commitment to the Wigginton Road corridor to develop an integrated scheme to understand how best to improve bus journey times and passenger interchange at York Hospital.

Delivering for our City

I continue to work alongside my York Labour MPs, Mayor and government Ministers to showcase the fantastic place that York is to do business. Working alongside our local organisations and businesses to push forward the vital investment in our city that will maintain and strengthen the infrastructure, systems, delivery of economic growth, homes and communities our city needs. We are a vibrant and optimistic city, attracting in both private and public investment, looking to the future and continually bucking the national trends on economic activity.

Having the strength in a Labour government, Mayor and Council that is aligned and pushing in the same direction allows me to push the case for a better funding settlement for York. Our revenue budgets in the Council are severely stretched particularly in the delivery of Adult Social Care. Complexity of cases and rising demand challenge the service every day. I will not rest until our city has access to the resources our public services need to deliver the standard of services the people of York require.

The following reports from the Executive Members will outline further activities and achievements for the people of York. Life in local government and authorities we all know is filled with challenges 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.

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

Grades, Achievements and Destinations

A key point in the annual cycle and in children's lives since the last report in July has been the initial outcomes of examinations taken by our young people, in May and June of the summer term. I am always in awe of everyone sitting exams, submitting coursework and demonstrating practical skills to prove their knowledge, understanding and abilities.

There is possibly more pressure to succeed than ever before, in what seems to be an increasingly competitive world but young people in York consistently rise to the occasion in all sorts of different ways. Some students will do this with straight A*s at A-level. Some students will do it with impressive first steps into work or other destinations after education. Some students refuse to be broken by a system that doesn't work for everyone and achieve huge milestones that are meaningful and right for them, ultimately getting them to a place in which they are proud of themselves. Some do all that and more.

Of course, stewarding our young people along this journey are our young carers, parents, guardians, foster carers and anyone else people call family alongside our educators and schools. Also, it is important not just to think of the ones who were there at the end of the journey but those that were there at the start as well. That nursery worker who supported that baby with learning to walk or that football coach is as important in a child's journey as the A-level tutor. Those people deserve our gratitude and support.

York learners continue to do well and early indications suggest above the national average for various measures in regard to outcomes, but this data isn't validated yet and I never think that this is what we should focus on. This shouldn't be a competition between schools, or even individuals; but about celebrating everyone's work and progress so far, and how they have prepared themselves for those vital next steps.

As corporate parents, I'm sure you'll be really pleased to hear that those achieving 5 GCSE grades above grade 4, including Maths and English, is considerably higher than last year and importantly almost all of this cohort already have firm plans about destinations and next steps in mind.

Interestingly, across the city we had a very slight reduction in the proportion of young people choosing the A-level route. It will be

something to track over time to see if young people are starting to look to different avenues for a successful future.

2026 Speak Up and Celebrate Event

As ever, this has become a staple part of the calendar in Children's Services and I'd like to thank our staff for taking the time to prepare such an excellent event and the Community Stadium for being such great hosts.

Yet again, this was probably bigger than the previous year's event and it was so nice to meet and chat with our young people and their families, friends, foster carers and social workers.

Public speaking competition - Primary Schools

As mentioned in the previous report, the Primary School York Young Citizens Public Speaking Competition will be taking place at the Merchant Adventurers Hall on the evening of 17 November. An email will be sent to all councillors with the details.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme:

York's HAF summer programme had 12,000 places available to book this summer, plus events such as the York Youth Festival which did not require pre-booking.

Activities included traditional out-of-school clubs, sports camps, arts and crafts, go-karting, climbing, trampolining, cooking workshops, gymnastics and dance, swimming, bushcraft, and much more. Though all our providers are inclusive, several of them offered additional SEND-focused sessions. For example, Oxygen Activeplay offered exclusive use of park space for SEND specific sessions, with a reduced capacity and a quieter atmosphere.

Within two weeks of the vouchers going live, activities were just over 80% booked. Prior to each school holiday period, schools receive a brochure with a list of available activities plus FAQs and contact information. Information for parents, providers, and schools can be found on Raise York at: <https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/directories/holiday-activities-food>

York Youth Festival

The second festival for young people in York was a roaring success with over 600 young people and children who turned up to enjoy the FREE

event aimed at teenagers, which featured live music from York's young musicians and youth bands, as well as lots of activities, food and fun.

There was a rugby inflatable course, footie kickabout, badge making, eco crafts, games to win prizes, table tennis, basketball, big Jenga and giant Connect Four, two youth vans, a drama corner as well as lots more!

The event was supported by the Communities Team with input from York Youth Council, and partnered with youth providers and information services from across the city to showcase the youth offer in York. The event was funded as part of the Holiday, Activities and Food Programme.

Executive Member for Economy and Culture, Councillor Pete Kilbane

Since our last Full Council Meeting, I am pleased to report that the applications for Cultural Passports for Young People have exceeded our expectations both in number and quality. We received 36 applications, any of which will open the door for our young people to a wide range of cultural immersion and engagement. This was a priority for our incoming Labour Administration, and it is gratifying to see yet another election promise fulfilled.

Heartfelt thanks to the Council staff who have made this happen. It was a new area of work for some of them and they have adapted brilliantly, ensuring a great outcome for our young people. They now have their work cut out scoring and assessing the many excellent applications that we have received. Not all will be successful but the funding round will open again in the new year. Thanks also to our partners in the cultural sector and the Labour Mayoral Combined Authority. As well as providing us with moments worth living for, culture is a growth industry. Labour, be it at National, Mayoral or at our Council level, shows its commitment to opening those career opportunities for all our young people, whatever their academic ability and with all their varied interests and abilities.

The other programme announced in my last report to this meeting was “Summer in York: Bring your community to life.” I am pleased to inform Council that so far Make it York have supported 15 events, of which only 8 needed grant funding. Many groups only needed advice and support, but the fund existing has enabled Make it York to work with those organisations to help bring residents together across the city. This has allowed us to stretch the project, with applications remaining open throughout the year.

We look forward to supporting more community projects than we expected. A key way to address the scourge of loneliness and isolation and counter the narrative of those who seek to drive communities apart, is to bring people together to celebrate and enjoy who they are and where they live. I am pleased that this project will continue to run beyond the summer as we intend an enabling approach to community gatherings becoming part of the Council's and Make it York's DNA.

Members will also be delighted to have seen that since we last met York has been nominated as Building Design's UK Design Capital of the Year 2026. The award is not about individual buildings but for places that

show strategic ambition in shaping the built environment. York has been nominated “for its balance of historic stewardship and forward-looking growth” as a “standard-bearer for progressive regeneration in historic places.”

This administration has consistently promoted ‘building the new out of the old’ and it is great to see the hard work of our planners, economic growth team and city partners being nationally acknowledged. This is also a clear message to potential inward investors that York is a great place to do modern business.

Talking of celebrating the old and embracing the new, I would also like to congratulate York Museums Trust (YMT) on the success of its summer exhibitions. The internationally renowned Aesthetica Art Prize for contemporary art, founded in York, celebrated its 20th anniversary with another wonderful show. And “Making Waves: The Art of Japanese Woodblock Print” was a runaway success with people travelling from near and far to enjoy 300 years of printing history from the 17th Century to our own times. I understand that visitor numbers greatly exceeded expectation, many of whom will have taken advantage of the opportunity to print their own version of Katsushika Hokusai's world-famous The Great Wave off Kanagawa that was on display.

I suspect I’m not the only Councillor proudly displaying their work on the kitchen fridge or hallway mirror. And we look forward to viewing Turner’s masterpiece “Ulysses deriding Polyphemus – Homer’s Odyssey” in the Gallery from tomorrow. This painting, along with the work of York-born artist, John Flaxman, whose work included designs used for Wedgwood pottery, is central to the curatorial narrative of the exhibition. And if that wasn’t enough to be going on with, there is a Dog Show in Museum Gardens on 20th September judged by none other than Yorkshire’s own Shepherdess, Author and TV personality Amanda Owen.

I want to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate CEO Kathryn Blacker and all the team at YMT for all that they achieve on a very tight budget. They continue to keep York firmly on the cultural map of the UK and beyond. Throughout years of austerity, York has managed to maintain and improve its culture and leisure facilities while many other parts of the country were closing theirs down. The recent announcement of a brand-new full-size FIFA standard 3G pitch at Burnholme Sports Centre shows our ongoing commitment. Where savings must be made, we have done so by working with partners and always with the needs of residents put first and foremost.

The council continues to face significant financial challenges. In responding to those challenges, we are creating a greater neighbourhood focus for delivery of council services. This will help improve the resident experience and generate vital savings, reduce costs and generate efficiencies in the years ahead. Sitting in the heart of our communities, Libraries will be a key part in how we develop our vision for more local services in the future across the city.

We have worked with Explore to look at options for delivering efficiencies and sustainable savings. These proved difficult to achieve while maintaining the key role that Libraries play in our communities and need to be considered within the evolving Neighbourhood Model. We look forward to continuing to work alongside Explore under current arrangements and take some pride in the culture and leisure facilities that we continue to provide for the benefit of residents.

In what have been difficult economic times York's overall picture, like that of the UK, is mixed. Some sectors are thriving, while others struggle. We perform well both regionally and against national comparator cities, though it might not feel this way if you are working in a difficult market. Confidence always matters in business, and it is incumbent on all elected members to talk up and promote our city at every opportunity. This we have done as an administration and will continue to do in the years to come. Ultimately, the reason York manages to ride out the economic storms is the optimism and brilliance of its people, magnificence of the place and the resilience of businesses. The latter is personified by the many organisations, including York BID, Indie York, the Chamber of Commerce, Make it York, CYC and YNYCA officers, and many more who work tirelessly to support each other and make the city the success that it is.

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

This summer has focused on strengthening neighbourhood-level health, deepening resident involvement in decision-making, and continuing our work to improve adult social care for York. Across all areas, the emphasis remains on listening, acting, and ensuring that people's real experiences shape the future of health and care in our city.

A major development is the redesign of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Through recent development workshops, Board Members agreed that the Board must evolve into something more rooted in communities, with meetings held in neighbourhoods rather than civic buildings. This shift reflects our commitment to neighbourhood health and to understanding directly from residents what helps them to thrive in their communities, or what barriers there are to this outcome.

We are now building a citizen panel to support this work, with a particular focus on seldom-heard voices, trusted relationships, and diversity across geography and demographics. We are also exploring how children and young people can be meaningfully included. Our ambition is for the Board to become a space that listens, learns, and takes action on the health experiences of everyone in York.

Nationally, Baroness Casey has launched The Big Conversation on Care, and York will play an active role. This is a national discussion about what adult social care should look like in the future, open to anyone who receives care, provides unpaid care, works in the sector, or simply cares about how care should be delivered. York is already undertaking significant improvement work, making this conversation both timely and important.

The people of York should be right at the heart of this conversation. It's about every one of us and our families and friends. Everyone in York, from every perspective, can contribute by engaging honestly with the difficult questions that must be answered if we are to build the shared agreement needed for lasting reform. We are encouraging wide participation so that York's voice is clearly heard.

Work continues at pace on our CQC improvement programme. Over recent months we have stabilised safeguarding triage, strengthened front-door decision-making, reduced waiting lists, and introduced clearer risk management and performance oversight. The next phase is about

embedding these improvements so they are consistent and sustainable. The direction of travel is positive, and the system is now better placed to deliver safe, timely and person-centred care.

Finally, the Wellbeing Hub at Acomb Garth continues to expand its offer. Opening hours have now increased to 8am–8pm, six days a week, with the ongoing plan to move to a 24/7 model. New groups, including gardening and walking, are already proving popular. The Hub's growth reflects how crucial it is for people to have direct, local access to mental health support when they need it, without barriers or delays. We will continue building on the success of York's mental health hubs as part of our wider prevention-focused approach.

Across all areas, the direction is clear: deeper community involvement, stronger neighbourhood support, and a health and care system that listens and responds to the people of York.

Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency,
Councillor Jenny Kent

Recognition for York's Parks

I want to begin by formally celebrating our newest Green Flag award in Hull Road Park for the first time, a fantastic addition to our four other Green Flag parks in the city: Rowntree Park, West Bank Park, Glen Gardens, and Clarence Gardens, all of which have retained their status for 2026.

The Green Flag Award scheme sets the benchmark for park management internationally, acknowledging well-managed green spaces across the UK and beyond.

This award is a huge tribute to local Labour councillors who have worked on improvements and community activities there for several years, CYC staff, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), St Nicks and other volunteer groups, and the new Friends of Hull Road Park. The improvements for our community and for nature, with endangered water vole now established in the cleaner water at Hull Road Park, are significant. Additional funding from our Parks Investment programme has enabled us to improve existing play equipment and add to it, as well as seating, painting and refreshing railings, and improved accessibility with handrail and footpath improvements.

Work on the footpath has incidentally uncovered an uncapped pipe linked to the sewer chamber some 30cm below the path surface, which explains previous repeated and very unpleasant sewage pollution, despite the chamber being checked by Yorkshire Water. I am really happy to say that CYC staff have sealed the pipe, and the new footpath is now finished.

August is a quieter month for Council business, but it has not been a quiet time for environmental concerns. We have had the hottest summer on record, having already passed the temperature records in 2024 to stay within the Paris Accord agreement of a 1.5 degree global temperature rise.

Disruption has occurred in my own Holgate ward and across the city due to burst pipes and failings in water infrastructure. Yorkshire Water has increased investment in the current 5-year cycle but decades of neglect are coming home to roost and we, the taxpayer, are footing the bill and

disruption. Profit has been privatised whilst loss is borne by us. It is not good enough, nor is the current response to the impact that these failings have on our communities in terms of clean up and making good our streets following repairs.

Public realm staff in York and across the country have had to deal with unprecedented hot and wet weather at different times over the past few months, when vegetation and weeds have grown at tropical rates. Additional staff in the Caretakers team have helped to keep active travel routes and paths clear, and all staff continue to work hard against unprecedented demand. They deserve our thanks and understanding.

A year on from the terrible destruction caused by the Fylingdales Moorland wildfires, we have seen wildfires much closer to home, in Hob Moor, Acomb, Clifton Ings and more. Much of Britain has been in drought. We cannot comfort ourselves that this a one-off – science tells us that these are the least extreme weather conditions any of us will see in our lifetimes, and as well as doubling down on efforts to cut emissions now, we need to take measures to adapt to extreme weather events.

A joint York and North Yorkshire report on Adaptation and Resilience will have been through Scrutiny by the time Full Council papers are published. It outlines the impacts on all areas of our lives – buildings, transport, insurance, food and water security, wildfires, flooding, power outages and biodiversity loss. York is very good at dealing with flooding and has well established networks in communities and the Local Resilience Forum.

We all need to build on these to support each other for the events to come. There is a fine line between scare mongering and practical planning, and we need to land firmly on the side of the latter, working together. Climate change will not be felt equally. It will impact our most vulnerable and poorest communities hardest and all elected members and community leaders need to play their part in addressing this and holding our city together.

Since screening the Peoples' Emergency Briefing in York City centre, more and more communities are showing the film in smaller venues. I hope this will galvanise all of us to demand urgent action from government on phasing out fossil fuels, on removing subsidies from polluting industries and enacting a Polluter pays principle for all aspects of our environment, and on taking the steps we can in our own lives and our city to make it genuinely sustainable. This is a worrying, but not a

hopeless time; a better, non-extractive future can emerge, but we need to shape it and shape it now.

On that note, the York Environment Festival runs from 3rd October to 1st November. We are supporting events via the Green Business Forum and at the Council's offices, on 13 and 14 October on 'Water quality and us; simple actions on healthier rivers', making 'York a Nature Park City', and on 29 October where residents who have opted out of chemical weed sprays will share how they manage weed control themselves, and are building communities in the process.

I encourage everyone to look at the programme and gain support and inspiration from the events, to take action in our own lives, and collectively.

Events I have attended or been part of since last Full Council:

- Volunteer thank you event at Rowntree Park where many of our wonderful volunteers and nature groups came together to share what they were doing, have a tour of the park, have a cup of tea, and celebrate successes. This followed on a citywide event to thank all our thousands of volunteers who have signed up to be litter pickers, leaf clearers, gardeners, snow wardens and more.

Thank you to all of you, you are a tribute to York. However, when it comes to litter, we should not need these wonderful people to give up their time to help keep our streets clean. We need a culture shift so the minority who drop litter in the first place, no longer do so. Seeing rubbish, often left a couple of yards away from a litter bin, is exasperating. I have a plea – find a bin or take your rubbish home. Our streets and parks are not a dustbin!

- Panel on clean Local Energy Production at the Yorkshire Show
- York Community Energy's first meeting at Hambleton exploring 'Riding Sunbeams' – a community energy project for solar powered rail at Hambleton Junction
- Various events celebrating Yorkshire Day and the first Nature and History within York's City Walls. Thank you to St Nicks for organising much of this.

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

Budget

The Outturn for 2025/26 has now been published and due to significant efforts across the council the overspend that was projected was mitigated by further savings. This resulted in a modest underspend that has been added to the general reserve to support pressures that we are aware of in the current year.

The process for setting the budget for 2027/28 is underway with cross-party groups looking at the budget setting process and the adult social care budget specifically. It is important to understand that the budget pressures come from higher costs to deliver services and higher demand for services combined with what is effectively a flat settlement from Government.

The Fair Funding Review carried out last year will place York as the lowest funded local authority (per capita) by next year. This is because funding is distributed on the basis of levels of deprivation which means less for less deprived cities like York but also because it assumes that all councils charge the average level of council tax. The national funding model assumes a 2026/27 Band D Council Tax level of £1,968.10, whereas York's actual Band D charge is £1,817.43. This means that we lose national Government funding, which for 2027/28 is around £8m.

We have worked hard every year to identify efficiencies and savings to meet the budget gap we have faced. This work is ongoing with a transformation programme looking at ways that the Council can work differently to preserve frontline services to residents while reducing costs. The cross-party Budget Scrutiny task and finish group has been examining each budget area for further opportunities to make savings and maximise efficiencies.

Financial Inclusion

The financial inclusion and welfare benefits outturn report will have just been approved by the time of the Full Council meeting. The report shows that fewer families are living in poverty but we know that the ever rising cost of living is making it more and more difficult for people to manage their finances. There is excellent work happening in partnership across the city on financial inclusion, ensuring that we share intelligence, developments and support across all organisations involved in this important area of support.

We continue to use data to target households where we think we can support residents to claim more financial support, be that directly from the Council or through national benefits systems. It is important that residents understand that there is help available, including direct support through the Crisis and Resilience Fund which we operate, through our own York Financial Assistance Scheme and through our work to support residents to apply for benefits. Our Welfare Benefits Officers supported residents to claim £2.2m worth of benefits last year and we distributed £1.76m to residents most in need.

As part of the council's financial inclusion work we support digital inclusion. Digital Friendly York has now become a Community Interest Company to enable them to bid for more funding to support the work they do across the city on digital inclusion.

With so much of our daily lives now reliant on use of the internet and digital tools it is ever more important to support people not only to learn to use those tools and systems safely and to protect themselves online but also to support access to devices and of course internet access for those who are unable to afford it.

We run three 'York Talk Money' campaigns each year, to ensure that residents know what help and support is available to them. The next will run in November to coincide with National Talk Money week. These are city wide campaigns run in partnership and aim to ensure that people living in York find the support they need.

Human Rights and Equalities Board (HREB)

HREB will hold its annual public meeting on 23 September. This meeting will consider the recommendations in the Human Rights Indicator Report and will include partners from across the city in discussions on three of the recommendations in particular:

- **Inequality Among Children and Young People** – speakers will address differing aspects of the attainment gap in the city and explore the three elements of the recommendations in the report
- **Equality and Non-discrimination** – speakers will explore the rise in hate crime in the city and the recommendation to take a Human Rights Based Approach to community cohesion and inclusion
- **Gender Pay Gap** – speakers will address the ongoing wide gender pay gap across the city along with disability and ethnicity pay gaps and propose ways to move forward in co-producing solutions.

Major Projects

Work continues on the Station Gateway project. After inheriting a contract from the previous Liberal Democrat-Green administration that placed all liability for overrun costs with the Council and a lack of robust project management, we have worked to restore control over the project. Following extensive cross-party scrutiny and an independent audit report requested by the Council Leader we have introduced measures to ensure that this and other major projects will have the required levels of oversight, project management and governance.

Meanwhile, we have sought to move the project forwards despite the lack of work at planning stage to identify the risks and dependencies such as agreeing the design of the crucial power substation.

Work on the cycle infrastructure is currently delayed due to a delay to work on the existing substation which currently sits in the way. This cannot be removed until the new substation is brought into commission. This process is currently being delayed by Network Rail but we are working to move it forward and anticipate a complete continuous off-road cycle route will open in early 2027. But most cycle lanes will open next month.

Executive Member for Transport, Councillor Kate Ravilious

Mayor's Local Transport Plan

At the end of last month the Mayor of York and North Yorkshire, David Skaith, launched a public consultation on the Local Transport Plan for the region. The plan sets out the long-term vision for improving transport across the region, helping everyone to travel more easily, safely and sustainably. We've been working with the Mayor and our colleagues in North Yorkshire to help shape the draft version of the plan and now we encourage everyone to respond to the consultation before 4th November, when the consultation closes.

Bus Service Improvement Plan

This month the Combined Authority Cabinet are being invited to approve a new Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for York and North Yorkshire, covering the period 2027 to 2032, and to develop a new Enhanced Partnership covering the geography of the Combined Authority. We have been working closely with the Mayor and our colleagues in North Yorkshire to help shape the BSIP, ensuring that it maximises the benefits of the bus improvements implemented by this administration and builds on the successes we have seen to date. It's great to see a wide range of positive commitments for York in the plan, including commitments to bus priority infrastructure on both the Fulford Road and Wigginton Road corridors.

Highways Maintenance Programme

Our Highways Maintenance Programme is flying along, with our record £16.5M investment starting to reverse the previous long-term decline in York's roads and pavements. Most recently the teams have resurfaced Beckfield Lane and improved bus stops and repaired pavements at the same time. As well as resurfacing schemes many areas of the city have received preventative treatments, such as surface dressing, which extends the life of roads and pavements by as much as ten years.

Some of the least visible but most important work that our teams do is clearing and repairing drains, and the additional funding this year has enabled us to carry out an extensive programme of drainage works, helping to make the city more resilient to heavy rain and flash flooding.

In addition to the planned programme the team have also had to deal with a significant number of emergency works this year. The combination of an extreme dry summer followed by a deluge of rain has put pressure on Yorkshire Water's aging infrastructure and resulted in emergency repairs and major disruption at a number of locations in the city including Leeman Road, Coney Street, Osbaldwick Lane and Paragon Street. I'd like to thank the officers who often had to work through the night and cancel leave in order to deal with these emergencies.

Cycle Parking

This month our teams have been upgrading cycle parking provision in the city centre, removing temporary stands and replacing with secure permanent cycle parking racks.

In some locations they have also installed inclusive cycle parking, suitable for trikes, cargo cycles and family cycles. This is all part of our commitment to make it easier for everyone to choose to cycle.

Drop in cycle theft

Cycle theft in York dropped by nearly a third in 2025 and has fallen to the lowest levels on record during the first quarter of 2026. This is great news and testament to the partnership working of the Secure Cycle York group, of which City of York Council is a part. Members have been proactive in organising regular bike security marking events, using the new BikeRegister system, and this has played a significant role in both reducing theft, but also helping to recover bikes and reunite with owners when they are stolen. There is still more work to do, but it is fantastic to see the impact that the Secure Cycle York group have had to date.

Launch of learn to Ride – adult cycle training

This month we launched our 'Learn to ride with us in York' scheme. This Mayoral funded project supports adults who want to learn to ride, or who would like to gain more confidence cycling. The first batch of sessions will be at Burnholme Leisure Centre and include the loan of a cycle if needed, and free cycle maintenance for those who have bikes that need a bit of TLC. I'm really pleased to see this programme start and helping people take those first daunting steps to learn to ride or get back in the saddle.

Walking Festival

York Walking Festival launches on Saturday, 19 September. Working with partners across the city, the festival offers dozens of group walks, taking in everything from snickleways to wild green spaces, and offering special insight into each area. From wildlife spotting to photography and history, there is something for everyone. The iTravel team have done a fabulous job in co-ordinating and promoting the festival and I warmly recommend joining a walk, discovering new places and making new friends.

**Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities,
Councillor Dave Merrett and Councillor Anna Perrett (job share)**

Housing Update

Following the C2 rating issued by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to CYC back in April, work has commenced to make the required improvements to achieve a C1 rating, which is the expectation from RSH for all social landlords.

The improvement actions being worked on include: completion of overdue fire safety actions, 100% of electrical testing completed on all social housing homes within a 5-year rolling programme, improving how we deal with complex repairs and update tenants, improving mechanisms to ensure effective and appropriate oversight/ scrutiny and intervention of housing performance. Improving complaints handling performance and ensuring that our tenants receive services that are tailored to their needs and that they have significant opportunities to be heard and have influence on shaping the services they receive from CYC.

The regulator will work closely with CYC, meeting on a bi-monthly basis, to ensure progress is being made and will assess and confirm when C1 status has been reached. The C2 was a fair reflection but as with all our services, we will continue to work to achieve the highest standards and ratings.

Planning Update

Local Plan

Having successfully secured government funding to support the process, officers are progressing York's new Local Plan under the new plan-making system, having published formal notice to commence plan-making at the end of July. The new Local Plan will set out the vision, spatial strategy and planning policies for York to 2045, and will include land identified for development.

A public scoping consultation and call for available development sites will launch imminently, before passing through 'Gateway 1' by the end of the year. Gateway 1 marks the formal start to the plan-making process and begins a strict 30-month timeframe within which the Plan must be prepared and adopted. Several key pieces of evidence are currently

being commissioned or prepared, including a housing needs assessment, economic needs assessment and green infrastructure study, as well as, in partnership with North Yorkshire Council, a green belt assessment, flood risk assessment and infrastructure capacity study.

National policy

In August the Government recently published a comprehensively updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which for the first time includes national development management policies. These policies will form a key part of determining planning applications across the country and apply with immediate effect. Where our adopted Local Plan policies are 'materially inconsistent' with the new national policies, our local policies would be given very limited weight in decision-making. Officers are reviewing the new policies to understand the implications for York.

Neighbourhood Plans

Officers continue to work closely with Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums working towards producing their own Neighbourhood Plans, which once adopted become part of the development plan for York. York currently has eight adopted Neighbourhood Plans, and a further 10 in preparation. Recent work has focussed on helping Neighbourhood Forums understand where existing or draft Neighbourhood Plans need updating to reflect the new NPPF.

Development Control

The York Central Planning reserved matters application has been successfully progressed by the team and will have been considered at Planning Committee on 10 September (after this report drafted). The application represents a huge milestone in the planning process as it's the first reserved matters that will deliver housing at the site, at least 20% of which will be affordable.

The team are also progressing a number of strategic housing sites, and it is expected that applications will be received this financial year, including ST15 at Elvington and ST14 at Clifton Gate. The Design and Conservation Team are involved in all the major schemes coming through planning, along with ensuring that changes with Biodiversity Net Gain are captured through the planning process. It was also good to see last year's performance figures showing increases in both the number of

housing permissions granted at 828 units, and, most importantly for York residents, the number of homes completed at 731.

Performance on planning application performance remains above the required national average and the planning enforcement team have served 8 enforcement notices so far this year.

A new national scheme of delegation is to be implemented from 31 October which will require changes in the way we operate and therefore to the Council's constitution.

Building Control

The Building Control team are continuing to deal with a range of cases and are steadily restoring their market share. The team are also working on the implementation of the Building Safety Levy.

Homelessness

The council is delivering its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29 through a partnership approach that brings together council services, the voluntary sector and public agencies to prevent homelessness and support people into sustainable housing.

Services such as Rough Sleeper Navigators, homelessness prevention casework and supported resettlement pathways provide trauma-informed support for people with complex needs, helping leverage additional government funding of £480,000 in 2025/26 and supporting the Government's ambitions for the future.

Alongside this, the council is increasing the supply of affordable homes through its own development, alongside planning obligations and partnerships with Registered Providers, delivering 113 new social rented homes in 2025/26 to help meet housing need and provide long-term solutions to homelessness.

Volunteering

Volunteering remains a key component of the council's communities agenda. Current work developing through the York Neighbourhood Model includes a specific focus on "Communities Helping Each Other" and is designed to strengthen community action, volunteering opportunities and neighbourhood networks. Across a range of programmes, including youth and community activities and wider

community initiatives, volunteers continue to play a significant role in supporting residents and building resilient communities.

I would like to focus in this report on the work of our Environment and Community Officers (ECOs) and how they support residents, community groups and corporate groups to volunteer, enhancing our local environment, green spaces and parks.

ECOs provide volunteers with training, equipment, supervision, support, practical help, expert knowledge and more - to empower communities to improve York for everyone's benefit. The following shows just what an amazing job volunteers do all over the city:

- **10,538 volunteer hours** improving green spaces across York April 2025 - July 2026. This total includes corporate action days through York Cares, Great British Spring Clean, and Big Community Challenge
- **5 green spaces** recognised as excellent and receiving Green Flag Awards
- **380 action days** - building community resilience, making a difference and new connections
- **1,817 environmental volunteers** registered with and supported by CYC
- **4,428 total volunteers** supported by the ECO Team: including action days, Great British Spring Clean, and corporate volunteering etc.
- **1157 Volunteer Litter Pickers** - Improving the appearance of areas that may otherwise be neglected
- **330 Volunteer Gardeners** - Help tend the city's green spaces, parks, wildlife areas and wildflower meadows
- **278 Volunteer Snow Wardens** - Keeping residential pavements clear of snow and ice
- **102 Park access volunteers** - Volunteers help keep parks secure by locking and/or unlocking the gates
- **51 Volunteer Leaf clearers** - Helping to keep drains and paths clear of leaves
- **11 Balsam basher** - Combatting the spread of this invasive non-native species; Himalayan balsam
- **36 Tree wardens Volunteers** - Taking care of the health of trees in York.

Community Safety and Safer Neighbourhoods

Significant work has taken place to refresh the Community Safety Strategy for 2026–29. Alongside this, officers are continuing to develop the joint Community Safety Hub and neighbourhood-based problem-solving arrangements to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and environmental issues. The service is focussing on aligning with neighbourhood working and early intervention approaches, helping partners identify issues earlier and deliver coordinated responses in local communities.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Work to tackle anti-social behaviour has remained a significant focus over recent months. Officers continue to operate a joint council and police approach through the Community Safety Hub, supported by regular multi-agency reviews and problem-solving arrangements.

Consultation preparations have also been progressing on the review of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO), alongside wider work to address persistent nuisance behaviour and improve outcomes for affected communities.

Residents and businesses are encouraged to complete the current PSPO consultation survey available here: [Have your say in current consultations – City of York Council](#) to feed into an Executive decision in November around extending our current City Centre PSPO to cover five new conditions targeting a range of behaviours. The conditions would provide powers to act against the following behaviours:

1. Intimidation and Coercion: Pressuring or deliberately intimidating someone into giving money.
2. Persisting in Requests: Continuing to ask for money, for food, or pressure others to voluntarily do something, after an initial refusal.
3. Pestering or Pursuing: Following, nagging or blocking the path of an individual.
4. Invasion of Personal Space: Hinder free passage, impede a doorway, or stand uncomfortably close to someone, such as directly beside them at a cash machine.

5. Disorderly groups: groups of people collectively engaged in shouting, aggressive or disruptive behaviour, or alcohol-fuelled behaviour likely to cause someone nearby to fear that disorder, abuse or a confrontation may occur.

Under the proposals, engaging in these five behaviours in York city centre would be an offence punishable by a fine.

Community Cohesion

Community cohesion work is being delivered through the York Hate Crime Partnership, community tensions monitoring arrangements and wider equality, diversity and inclusion programmes.

Partners continue to monitor community concerns, support community dialogue and promote inclusive communities through coordinated partnership activity across York and North Yorkshire.

The Summer community events work supported by Make It York and the £50k Pride in Place funding approved in our last budget has supported a range of activities including Acomb Fest, bringing our communities together. The funding is now supporting year-round events within communities.

In late July, a firearms-related incident occurred at York Mosque on Bull Lane. North Yorkshire Police responded immediately following reports that shots had been fired from a vehicle in the area during the early hours of the morning. Thankfully, nobody was harmed.

I'm pleased at the way local agencies, including the Police, and councillors responded to this incident and provided reassurance to the local Mosque community in the days that followed.

Prevent

Regular assessments of local risks and emerging threats inform the work of the York Prevent Delivery Group, supporting targeted action plans, safeguarding activity and wider efforts to build resilient communities and prevent radicalisation. Our thanks to Leeds City Council for working with CYC colleagues on the recent councillor training on Prevent.