

Meeting	Decision Session - Combined Executive Member Decision Session
Date	8 September 2026
Present	Councillors Merrett [until 10:14am], and Lomas
Officers in Attendance	Ben Murphy – Head of City Development Nicola Greyson – Regeneration Project Co- ordinator Pauline Stuchfield – Director of Housing and Community Services David Walker – Head of Customer Finance Risk and Insurance Susan Wood – Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager

28. Appointing a Chair (10:01am)

Resolved: That arrangements for Chairing the meeting were confirmed as follows:

- Councillor Merrett – All standard agenda items 1-5, and agenda item 8 – Walmgate Improvement Scheme.
- Councillor Lomas – Agenda item 7 - Financial Inclusion/Welfare Benefits Outturn 2025/26, and 8 – Urgent Business.

29. Apologies for Absence (10:01am)

There were no apologies.

30. Declarations of Interest (10:01am)

The Executive Members were invited to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests, or any disclosable pecuniary interests that they might have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

31. Minutes (10:02am)

Resolved: That the minutes of the Combined Executive Member Decision Sessions held on Tuesday, 7 July, Tuesday, 30 July and Tuesday, 11 August 2026 be approved and signed as a correct record.

32. Public Participation (10:02am)

It was reported that there was one registration to speak under the Council's public participation protocol.

Ben Ffrench spoke on item 6, representing York Green Party. He supported the proposed plans but noted uneven wealth distribution within the city and specifically the Walmgate area, which he felt created antisocial behaviour leading to demands on the authority such as maintenance requests. He stressed the importance of increasing pride in this area as part of the scheme and suggested that following recent successes in other parts of the city, there was an opportunity for a more colourful Walmgate, with street art and energy, noting that this was the first area of city that many students and tourists saw when arriving.

33. Walmgate Improvement Scheme (10:06am)

The Head of City Development presented the report assisted by the Regeneration Project Co-ordinator.

Officers noted that the final version of the South Walmgate Masterplan investment aligned with the Willow House redevelopment scheme and set out eight themes and 13 projects to improve existing spaces within the wider area.

Officers confirmed that Executive Members had approved a budget of £250,000 in January 2026 and since that time officers had secured further funding, taking this up to nearly £1,000,000 together with Mayoral Combined Authority and Local Transport Grant funding. They also sought to invest in the space together with Yorkshire Water.

Officers summarised the long-term Masterplan vision; phase one included promotion of active travel improvements and greening with community-

backed plans to attract further funding to reinvest for future development. He confirmed that they also intended to proceed with community artwork and addition of colour as suggested by the speaker in Public Participation.

They advised that with Executive Members' approval, procurement would commence over the autumn of 2026 work would begin later in the calendar year and delivery would follow as soon as possible, with the intention of demonstrating measurable improvement for residents from spring of 2027.

They noted that assuming success in Walmgate, they would be able to take this coordinated neighbourhood investment approach to other areas of the city as well.

The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Communities (Cllr Merrett) welcomed the report, thanking officers and his predecessor for their hard work on the scheme.

He asked to what extent officers were confident that they could work within the stated budget to deliver all of the works for phase one of the scheme.

The Head of City Development responded that he was confident that a sizable amount of the scheduled works would be deliverable within the available budget, though he noted that the transport side could be capital-heavy and it was only once works were tendered that they would know for sure.

The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Communities asked about the potential of bidding for further funds to become available, since quite a lot of the security improvements were potentially linked to those further projects.

The Head of City Development responded that officers had begun early conversations with North Yorkshire Police around how investment would be coordinated, and while there were no other immediate sources he anticipated other opportunities would arise going forward.

Resolved:

- i. To approve the final version of the South Walmgate Masterplan.
- ii. To approve the initial project prioritisation of phase 1 and subsequent phases
- iii. That approval be given to carry out a procurement process to procure multi-disciplinary design and project delivery teams to deliver the South Walmgate Masterplan in line with the existing financial

approvals, and that authority be delegated to the Director of City Development or Director of Housing & Communities as relevant in accordance with their respective functions (in consultation with the Executive Members for Housing, Planning & Safer Communities, the Chief Finance Officer and the Director of Governance or their delegated officers) to take such steps as are necessary to procure, award and enter into the resulting contract(s).

Reasons:

- i. To enable delivery of a first phase of projects.
- ii. To ensure transparency and clear decision making around the South Walmgate Masterplan programme.
- iii. To ensure all grant funding and contractual arrangements are in compliance with the Finance Regs, CPRs, the Procurement Act, PCR, Subsidy Control Act 2022 and related legislation.

34. Benefits Financial Inclusion/Welfare Outturn 2025/26 (10:14am)

[Cllr Merrett left the meeting at 10:14am]

The Director of Housing and Community Services presented the item, assisted by The Head of Customer Finance Risk and Insurance and The Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager.

The Director of Housing and Community Services explained that the report outlined the support provided by the council and its partners for residents facing significant financial pressures arising from the cost of living, housing, affordability, health inequalities, and wider economic challenges; spanning welfare benefits, advice, services, digital inclusion, community support, crisis assistant and partnership working across the city.

She noted that there was a major focus on income maximisation and welfare advice, and welfare benefits officers and community-based benefit advisers had secured residents millions of pounds in increased welfare entitlement. She stated that the availability of data allowed easier targeting here and the amount of funding represented an overall reduction, so they were making less go further, therefore effective partnership working was increasingly important.

The Head of Customer Finance Risk and Insurance added that this programme of work had been developed over several years. There had

been a small decrease in the number of families living in poverty, and the Household Support Fund's work had directly impacted the figures.

He added that officers were not just using this system for paying out Household Support Fund and Crisis and Resilience Fund benefits but they could also track Healthy Start and other programmes with it. Support around food and fuel vouchers was ongoing, with a more person-centred approach. All residents of working age in receipt of benefits had now migrated to Universal Credit but not everyone was yet claiming household support, which was one point to flag.

Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion congratulated officers and partners, stating that this was a good opportunity to make life better for many residents and it was important to work with partners and share intelligence to this end. She asked officers to provide her with further information on the figures on reduction of families in poverty. She acknowledged that many families were feeling financial pressure and council were helping with this. She praised use of Lift data for Highlighted targeted support and the work of Welfare Benefits Officers in making real genuine improvement with £2.2 million across 400 residents and she highlighted crucial role of digital inclusion.

She also highlighted less visible work by the wider community such as warm spaces in winter and Cool Spaces in Summer schemes and highlighted York Hungry Minds – specifically for their holiday scheme.

Resolved: To note and comment on the details of the report in relation to the support provided to residents affected by the impacts of the continuing high cost of living.

Reason: To ensure councillors, residents and stakeholder groups are aware of the ongoing financial inclusion activity across the city.

Cllr D Merrett and Cllr K Lomas, Chairs

[The meeting started at 10.01 am and finished at 10.32 am].

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