

North Yorkshire Council

Housing and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 23 September 2025 commencing at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Committee Members present: Councillor Sam Gibbs in the Chair. Plus Councillors John Ritchie, Karl Arthur, John Cattanach, Caroline Dickinson, Bob Packham, Stuart Parsons, Yvonne Peacock, Clive Pearson, Phil Trumper, Matt Walker and Greg White, Phillip Broadbank (substitute) and David Jeffels (substitute).

Officers present: Nic Harne, Andrew Rowe, Victoria Young, David Ashbridge, Hazel Smith and Melanie Carr

Other Attendees: Matthew Ward, Julie Young, Rachael Simpson and Jackie Stubbs.

Apologies: Councillors Nigel Knapton, John Mann, Kirsty Poskitt and Dan Sladden

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

68 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nigel Knapton, John Mann, Kirsty Poskitt and Dan Sladden. Councillor David Jeffels substituted for Councillor Nigel Knapton and Councillor Phillip Broadbank substituted for Councillor Dan Sladden.

69 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 June 2025

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025 be taken as read and signed by the Chair as a true record.

70 Declarations of Interest

A number of declarations of interest were made in relation to Agenda Item 6 – Annual Review of Libraries, as follows:

- Councillor Bob Packham declared an interest as the Chair of Sherburn and Village Community Trust
- Councillor Yvonne Peacock declared an interest as a member of the Upper Dales Community Partnership
- Councillor Phillip Broadbank declared an interest as a Trustee of Scarborough Library

Councillor Karl Arthur declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 – Housing Revenue Account Policy Framework Update, as the managing Director of a Property Management Company.

71 Public Participation

Four public questions/statements were received as follows:

Question presented by Matthew Ward (resident of Richmond)

“I have a simple question to which I would like a simple answer: why was Richmond Pool not included in the Leisure Investment Strategy?”

We are delighted that our pool has received a recommendation of funding for it to reopen as soon as possible. It is an iconic, award-winning asset used by the whole community for health, well-being and fun. However, it is extremely worrying that it has not been included in any longer term plan for investment, it just been allocated money from a discretionary fund for a set of immediate issues.

Pickering (population 6800) gets £10m, no scheduled closures and a 25 year investment plan. While Richmond (population 8500) gets £1.2m after what will be at least year of closure and no long term plan for improvements to a building which will celebrate 50 years of operation next year. Why no plan? Why no improvements?

And if you think it's about the catchment, Ryedale has a population of 54,000, Richmondshire 50,000. Again, why is Richmond being overlooked?

And please don't think I'm picking on Pickering. I'm delighted for them that their facilities are getting the investment they need. And for the residents of Whitby, Skipton and Selby. But just to underline, the cost per capita of investment in Pickering, Whitby and Skipton is around £1500, £750 and £700 per capita. Richmond gets £150 per person. Why is Richmond not getting the same level of investment as other areas?

The unsubstantiated claims that Catterick Garrison Pool provides both competition and a viable alternative to Richmond should at best be scrutinised and in reality, thrown out altogether. Catterick Leisure centre serves the MOD and Catterick garrison's civilian residents with an existing population of 14,000, anticipated to rise to 18,000 in the next few years. The pool is already very heavily used with limited access to the public at key times of the day – and this will only get worse. It's also a 3 mile drive from Richmond so accessible only by those with a car.

Again, without any comparisons to other facilities, it is claimed that user numbers are suboptimal at Richmond Pool. What are the user numbers at Ryedale Pool? What are the projected numbers after the £10m investment?

And after two long closures and under investment in facilities – not just the structure of the building, but the changing areas, reception, café, and staff – it's incredible that our pool has the visitors it does. If it is given the right investment, the periodic closures are put to an end and it is run properly, you will see visitor number increasing even more.

So to conclude, why was Richmond Pool not included in the Leisure Investment Strategy? Give our iconic 50 year old pool a chance to thrive.”

In response it was confirmed that all of the council's leisure facilities were included in the leisure investment strategy and assessed based on the criteria listed in paragraph 3.3 of the report.

Attention was drawn to the forward plans for essential building works at Richmond Swimming Pool, costing in the region of £1.18m which did not include for upgrading the customer facing facilities and equipment. It was noted:

- The pool operated with a subsidy in excess of £400K, due mainly to comparatively less throughput than at other facilities.
- A full options appraisal had been carried out, including significant development options, however, those options proved unfeasible due mainly to financial performance and comparatively well served local provision, including facilities at Catterick, Bedale and Northallerton.
- Funding had been allocated to install new gym equipment at the adjacent Liberty Health Club and a programme of asset lifecycle repair and replacement had been implemented for the site.

- Significant investment had been proposed to establish Active Wellbeing Hubs at Whitby, Skipton, Pickering and Selby, and following careful and detailed consideration, those locations had met the criteria of greatest need, strategic significance and balance across the largest portfolio of council ran leisure centre's in the UK, both in terms of number of venues and area.
- During the closure period, the Council had worked closely with Catterick Leisure Centre to understand their provision and how they could accommodate Richmond Swimming Pool users. Those positive discussions had led to further capacity being added to their programme for more community swimming and club hire. The swimming availability at Catterick Leisure Centre was extensive, operating with three pools, with only 3 hours per day (Mon-Fri) where there was restricted community access to one of the pools due to MOD exclusive use.

It was also confirmed that the essential repair work at Richmond would be carried out as soon as possible, to enable the team to deliver excellent service provision and with that increased usage/demand.

Question presented by Julie Young (resident of Richmond)

"While the council has agreed to repair the roof and heating system at Richmond Swimming Pool, there is concern that these works may only represent a short-term fix. It would be helpful to have confirmation that the repairs will ensure the long-term integrity of the building, and that the existing heat pump and solar panel systems will be fully serviced and optimised for maximum efficiency. In addition, clarity is needed on whether full condition surveys have been undertaken to identify other elements of the building and systems—such as the pool tank, pipework, ventilation, electrics, changing facilities, and accessibility features—that will require upgrading very soon and whether the findings can be shared with the community. Residents would also welcome information on any phased refurbishment or continuous improvement plan, setting out the expected works and upgrades beyond the current repairs, together with the projected lifespan of the pool before further major investment is needed. We would like to understand what long-term financial provision has been made, including whether a dedicated capital and maintenance budget has been allocated, and if external funding streams such as Sport England or community wellbeing grants will be pursued. Above all, the community seeks assurance that the pool will not fall back into a cycle of crisis repairs and risk of closure, but will instead remain a sustainable long-term community asset. Finally, we ask that local residents, pool users, and community groups are actively engaged and kept informed, with a clear forward plan published so that the community has visibility and confidence in the future of Richmond Swimming Pool."

In response it was confirmed that the programme of essential work required to re-open the pool included:

- Ceiling repairs
- Mechanical and electrical upgrades to the air handling system, including effective operation of the air source heat pump.
- Pool plant improvements

Officers went on to confirm:

- A comprehensive 10 year asset condition assessment had been carried out, and that the essential items listed above were in the 0-2 year category, with further works identified between 3-10 years.
- There was no timeline to indicate the 'lifespan' of the pool - the asset condition programme included all required work and associated costs to keep the site operational.
- Funds had been allocated to install new gym equipment at the adjacent Liberty Health Club and opportunities to 'refresh' customer facing areas alongside the essential works programme were being considered.

- It was very unlikely that Sport England would support any capital investment, as their recent programme of investment was more focussed on programme delivery, with options for Active North Yorkshire being explored.
- Other capital grant funding opportunities were unlikely, aside from decarbonisation initiatives. It was noted the site had recently received funding for interventions such as air source heat pumps and solar pv.
- Customers and stakeholders would be kept informed of progress and updated would be provided on expected re-opening dates, once a work programme was approved.

Statement submitted by Rachael Simpson (resident of Exelby) - presented by Julie Young

"I believe that there needs to be a long term plan for community engagement in the running of Richmond swimming pool. This is given how important the pool is for public health, young people learning to swim, and community wellbeing.

Can you agree with the importance of creating a committee which includes members of the local community, to discuss the long term direction and maintenance works required at the swimming pool? This would ensure that local views and priorities are properly represented."

In response officers acknowledged the importance of sport and leisure provision across North Yorkshire and the value that those council facilities had in local communities. They welcomed customer feedback and future discussions with local community groups that were formed to help improve the service.

Statement presented by Jackie Stubbs (resident of Hudswell)

"I ask you to consider the impact of closing the pool temporarily for the repairs to be done, only for it to be possibly closed again for further renovations required. Our iconic pool with its huge windows ticks two health and well-being points known to be of benefit that no other public pools in this area do - day light and nature. We should promote and celebrate this as a health and wellbeing asset (iconic award winning design). The pool is 50 next year (2026) 20yrs past its life cycle, and from what I can see has had very little lifecycle investment compared to other pools (within North Yorkshire)

Would it be more cost effective and less disruptive to renovate the whole site, incorporating the gym etc under one roof, at the moment the rent for the gym building is over £35k per year. This would benefit staffing arrangements to.

With Catterick and Colburn increasing population and housing development this year (2025) -est:820 and the next 20yrs it's estimated 2,800. This will have an impact on the already straining MOD pools - when does this pool reach its life expectancy?

Statistics say the Geriatric population in Richmond area will be 50% higher by 2030, swimming has a huge positive impact for the NHS and social care system. Hip replacement being the most common operation in this sector aquatic physio is highly recommended for faster recovery.

The pool site is large enough to take it. Have it all done and future proof, be ready before Catterick pool bursts.

We know from being part of the community, people haven't used the pool because of its tired and weary conditions, but they definitely would if it was upgraded. Build it they will come.

I wonder how many of this board have actually used the pool recently/ ever?
Please consider, include and 'talk' to your community face to face that use this pool."

In response, attention was drawn to the previous officer responses where many of the

points raised had been covered. Officers confirmed that a full options appraisal had been carried out, exploring a range of options, including re-locating the health and fitness space (gym and studio) into the pool building.

It was noted that following careful consideration and assessment against detailed criteria, that option along with other significant development works were found to be unfeasible, due mainly to financial performance, demand and the comparatively well served local provision, including facilities at Catterick, Bedale and Northallerton.

The Chair thanked the public participants for their contributions to the meeting.

72 Leisure Investment Strategy Update

Considered – A report of the Assistant Director for Culture and Leisure introducing a new draft Leisure Investment Strategy for North Yorkshire Council.

David Ashbridge – Head of Operations for Active North Yorkshire introduced the report and provided a presentation on the Leisure Investment Strategy which included an overview of the associated workstreams detailed at paragraph 3.4 of the report. He drew attention to the proposed works and the summary of the financial modelling for each of the proposed four Active Wellbeing Hubs (AWBs), and the list of the remaining retained sites included in the Strategy.

In response to Members' questions on the Strategy, David Ashbridge confirmed:

- Due to the level of demand, the planned increase in floorspace at Craven Leisure Centre was expected to generate double the income.
- The proposed four Active Wellbeing Hubs would each require a detailed business case, with a focus on delivering a balance between commercial interest and serving their community.
- The needs of local residents (20 mile radius) were taken into consideration i.e. analysis of latent demand.
- Robust asset condition survey had been completed for all Leisure Centres which identified the ongoing maintenance work required at each site and the challenges they face.
- The need to encourage greater use of leisure facilities by those living in rural areas
- Inclusivity had been a key factor in developing the Strategy, with planned investment in improving access for those with disabilities and engagement with disability groups etc.
- A harmonised pricing structure and memberships was to be introduced in March 2026 – it was noted that in some areas discounts were currently being offered to those 66+, and some areas had waiting lists for young people.
- A schedule for the planned refurbishment works had yet to be devised.
- Inflation had been taken account of as part of the cost profiling.
- The option of replacing the Derwent facility with a new build at Malton had been considered but not progressed due to the level of investment it would require.

Nic Harne, Corporate Director for Community Development drew attention to the longer term planned investment work detailed in the Strategy, which included works to Richmond Pool. Specifically in regard to the options appraisal review for Richmond Pool, Members noted the responses given to the public questions asked at the start of the meeting and suggested it may have been helpful to separate the longer term planned investment from the emergency work required for Richmond Pool.

Overall, Members welcomed the Investment Strategy noting the wellbeing benefits gained from leisure activities. They also acknowledged there were gaps in the provision of leisure facilities across the county. Officers recognised the challenge of introducing new facilities and confirmed work was underway to identify those gaps. It was suggested that communities needed to help identify where there were bespoke needs.

The Chair thanked David Ashbridge for his overview of the Strategy, noting it was scheduled to be considered by the Executive on 4 November 2025. He drew attention to the recommendations to be proposed to the Executive and sought the Committee's endorsement of those recommendations.

Resolved – That:

- i. The draft Leisure Investment Strategy be noted
- ii. That recommendations (i) – (iv) as listed in paragraph 15 of the report, be referred to the Executive as part of their consideration of the draft Leisure Investment Strategy.
- iii. That an update on the implementation of the Investment Strategy be added to the Committee's work programme for 2026-27.

73 Annual Review of Libraries

Members received a presentation from Hazel Smith, General Manager of NYC Libraries, providing an overview of the work of the Library Service and its achievements since the last annual update in September 2024.

Members noted the four key themes i.e. Literacy & Learning, Digital, Health & Wellbeing and Communities detailed in the presentation. In particular:

- The introduction of a new Library Management System
- The Service Team restructure
- The Services' performance against its key performance indicators
- The increase in uptake of the digital offer
- The number of recorded library visits (1.8m)
- The other services being delivered from libraries
- The comparison data with other rural authorities

Hazel Smith went on to give an overview of the priorities for 2025-26, as detailed in her presentation and in response to questions confirmed:

- Service delivery was dependent on the continued support from volunteers
- Volunteers were trained to look out for problems/issues and to signpost to council services
- IT volunteers were in situ in all community libraries
- The libraries provided a warm place for residents to come
- The future use of AI would help improve service efficiency

Recognising that community libraries were an asset to their community and contributed to residents' wellbeing, Members recorded their appreciation for the work of library staff and volunteers, and it was

Resolved - That the Library Services annual update be noted.

74 Housing Revenue Account Policy Framework Update

Considered – a presentation updating on the ongoing development of the HRA Policy Framework provided by Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing.

Andrew Rowe confirmed there had been over 70 policies, standards, procedures, guidance documents etc relating to tenancy management and housing standards inherited from the 3 stock holding authorities and went on to outline the progress made to deliver a range of new/harmonised strategies/policies for the new council.

The Committee noted the work completed to date and the scale of the outstanding work required. They also identified a number of policy/strategy 12 month reviews they would be interested in contributing to, e.g.:

- Allocations Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Compensation Policy

The Committee also agreed to consider the final draft of a Shared Ownership Policy at its meeting in March 2026, prior to its consideration by the Executive Member for Culture, Arts & Housing.

Finally it was agreed the Committee would like to undertake a more in depth Task Group scrutiny review of the Council's:

- Housing Fees and Charges Policy (including recharges)
- Pets Policy

Having agreed a way forward, it was

Resolved – That

- i. The update on the ongoing development of the HRA Policy Framework be noted.
- ii. The Committee's work programme be updated to reflect the agreed way forward, as detailed above.

75 Housing Improvement & Regulatory Update

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development providing an update on progress made toward compliance with the requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation Act), and oversight of the Councils Housing Improvement Strategy and Performance Framework in advance of their consideration by the Executive Member.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing introduced the report and provided a brief presentation which drew attention to progress against:

- The seven workstreams
- A number of governance and oversight issues
- The ongoing stock condition survey programme
- The works to keep homes safe and compliant
- Understanding tenants needs and delivering safer neighbourhoods
- Repairs and maintenance work
- The adoption of a new NYC Tenancy Strategy & Policy and ongoing tenancy management

Andrew Rowe went onto outline the means by which the Strategy would be monitored and in response to members' questions confirmed:

- Consultants (Savilles) were currently undertaking a health check – Members requested an update on this for their next meeting
- The ASB Policy would be reviewed in the future
- Fire Risk Assessments were only required where there were communal spaces. There was no legal requirement to carry them out on individual homes.
- The Council's adoption of long term empty properties was currently being assessed. The next step would be an options appraisal – Members requested this be added to their future work programme for the end of 2026.

- The bar is set very high for a property to be deemed no longer sustainable
- The Council had made a commitment to deliver 500 new homes over 5 years

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Housing for the performance update, and it was

Resolved – That the Housing Improvement & Regulatory Update be noted.

76 Complaints Update

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development providing an update on complaints handling performance within the Housing Service.

Victoria Young, Housing Service Improvement Manager presented the report and confirmed the position was improving.

Members were pleased to note the ongoing overall improvement in complaints handling since the revised policy had been introduced, and that the council's response and resolution of complaints was being done satisfactorily. They also noted that the majority of complaints were related to landlord services, and the improving picture in relation to the time taken to resolve repairs.

The Chair thanked officers for the update, and it was

Resolved – That the update on complaints handling performance within the Housing Service be noted.

77 Grounds Maintenance Review - Verbal Update

Councillor Kevin Foster (member of the Grounds Maintenance Scrutiny Review Task Group) provided a brief verbal update on the ongoing work to consider and identify an appropriate Grounds Maintenance Policy for the new Council. This included an overview of the findings from site visits undertaken in Selby and Harrogate alongside members of the Tenants Panel, which had helped identify the current difference in provision and standards across those areas. He also thanked officers for their ongoing support on the review.

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed the Task Group's planned next steps would include seeking up to date costings for the maintenance and one-off works work undertaken by the Parks & Grounds Service for the HRA, in order to identify an appropriate and financially sustainable specification for application across all three legacy stock holding areas.

The Chair thanked Task Group members for their work on the review to date, and it was

Resolved – That the verbal update on the ongoing work to undertake a review of the Council's Ground Maintenance Policy be noted.

78 Work Programme 2025-26

Considered – The work programme for the remainder of the 2025-26 municipal year presented by the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

Members took account of the discussions on previous agenda items and review work, and other developments taking place across the county, and agreed a number of additions to their work programme for the December 2025 meeting as follows:

- An update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the previous

Lettable Standard Task Group Review.

- An overview of the findings arising from the Consultants (Savilles) health check

The Committee added consideration of the Council's draft Shared Ownership Policy to its March 2026 meeting and agreed to receive feedback in late December 2026, on an assessment of the Council's options for the adoption of long term empty properties.

Resolved – That the work programme document be updated as above.

79 Date of Next Meeting - 1 December 2025

The meeting concluded at 1.00 pm.