

North Yorkshire Council

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the in person meeting held on Monday, 15 December 2025 commencing at 10.30 am.

Councillor Andrew Williams in the Chair. Plus Councillors Bryn Griffiths, Chris Aldred, Derek Bastiman, David Chance, Kevin Foster, Tim Grogan, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Tom Seston, Subash Sharma, Phil Trumper, Greg White and Peter Wilkinson.

In attendance: Councillor Carl Les and NYP Chief Superintendent Fiona Wyllie

Officers present: Melanie Carr, Gary Fielding, Amani Anderson Leefe, Trudy Forster, Odette Robson, Will Boardman and Matthew Robinson.

Apologies: Councillors Karl Arthur and Nick Brown

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

78 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Karl Arthur and Nick Brown. Councillor Nick Brown was substituted by Councillor Peter Wilkinson.

79 Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 September 2025

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2025 be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a true record.

80 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

81 Public Participation

No public questions or statements were received.

Before moving to the first main item of business, the Chair welcomed the Leader to the meeting. He also took the opportunity to draw Committee members' and the Leader's attention to the reports within the agenda and in particular, the lack of comparative data from previous years, which if provided would have enabled Members to better understand the direct of travel of particular issues and the impact of any mitigation measures referred to in the reports.

He requested that report authors consider this when producing future reports, and asked the Leader to note this concern.

82 Community Safety Update

Considered – A presentation from the Head of Community Safety and CCTV, providing an update on progress against the NYCSP priority of tackling hate crime, and an update on the work of the Community Safety Hubs which included data on specific crime types.

Odette Robson, Head of Community Safety confirmed the operational work of the Hubs was not within the remit of the committee, as they reported to the Area Constituency

Committees, which was why the Committee did not usually receive data on specific crime types across the county within their bi-annual CSP Delivery & Partnerships Working update.

The Chair suggested the Committee should encourage the Area Committees to request biannual crime data updates to ensure Members were aware of the ongoing issues within their divisions and the steps being taken to address them. In response it was confirmed:

- Those committees were already receiving bi-annual community safety updates from the Community Safety Hubs and that operational statistics could be included in those going forward.
- There was often peaks and troughs in the crime data as a result of seasonal trends.
- Hate crime was often linked to the night time economy
- Police officers were often subjected to hate crime

In response to Members questions, Odette Robson and Fiona Wyllie, Chief Superintendent for North Yorkshire Police confirmed:

- Key elements to tackling hate crime were community engagement, and working with schools and North Yorkshire Youth Groups – online hate was often reported by school leaders. The importance of early education was stressed, and the work of school liaison officers was noted
- Early intervention and prevention were a key focus of the Joint Coordination Group, as detailed on slide 11
- One of the challenges was mis-information. It was noted that the media often delivered incorrect/inflammatory information. Issuing joint NYC and NYP communications was helpful to ensure the right messages were going out, helping to deflate situations.
- Tackling anti-social behaviour provided key intelligence on other more serious organised crime.
- The clean-up of graffiti was sometimes delayed to enable intelligence gathering
- The Hate Crime team consisted of a sergeant and PC who coordinated work out in to the area teams. The team oversaw all reported hate crime incidents and liaised with victims
- Tackling anti-social behaviour hotspots – there had been notable success in Harrogate with a significant reduction, delivered through a wider collective approach.
- There were ongoing initiatives in other areas, with monthly discussions on neighbourhood plans. The Chair requested information on the ongoing work in his division.

Councillor Subash Sharma stressed the importance of integration and the role of community leaders, recognising integration was different for different groups/communities. Understanding what it might entail for specific communities would provide people who come in from the outside to have a context within which to work.

Odette Robson drew attention to her cycle of 6-monthly committee updates on community safety and requested that the Committee identify an area of focus for her next update.

The Chair agreed to consider this at the next mid cycle briefing, and thanked the officer and Chief Superintendent for their presentation.

Resolved – That:

- i. The update on tackling hate crime and the work of the Community Safety Hubs be noted.
- ii. Information on the ongoing work in the Ripon Minster & Moorside division be provided to the Chair
- iii. The Area Committees be encouraged to request operational statistics as part of their Community Safety Hubs 6-monthly updates

83 Presentation on Home Working Arrangements & Sickness Absence

Considered – A presentation on Hybrid Working and Sickness Absence provided by the Assistant Chief Executive (HR & Business Support)

Trudy Forster, the Assistant Chief Executive (HR & Business Support), provided a detailed overview of two issues drawn from the Committee's annual Workforce Update delivered at its meeting in June 2025.

In regard to sickness absence, Members noted the data provided on the number of days lost per quarter, per FTE by Directorate in 2024/25. They also noted the data for the first two quarters in 2025/26 (shown on slide 16), which showed the numbers for every directorate were increasing.

In response to members questions, Trudy Forster confirmed:

- All absentees are required to undertake a return-to-work interview with their line manager or team leader on their return.
- The annual cost to the Council as a result of sickness absence was around £8m
- Sickness levels were higher than pre-covid but lower than the previous year – Members requested a table of year on year data in order to be able to understand the direction of travel.
- There was no national collection of workforce data making it difficult to benchmark the authority against other similar authorities.
- New employees were expected to spend the most of their time in the office during the first 3 months to allow for a proper induction
- Multi-generational workforces required a range of ways of working to suit a range of age groups

Members discussed the benefits to new and younger members of staff of working in the office alongside older more experienced members of their team, which would only be possible if both parties were in the office. In response, Trudy Forster confirmed the Policy was designed to deliver what works well for both employees, their teams and the organisation as a whole.

Noting the average age of the workforce was 46, Members also queried the age profile of sickness absentees, querying whether age was a factor for some of the reasons for sickness absence. Trudy Forster agreed to look at that and include a breakdown based on age in her next workforce annual update.

Noting the number of sickness absences as a result of physical injury, Members queried the mitigation training provided, and it was confirmed that staff training was provided on safe working environments and manual lifting etc. Members requested that information on mitigation training and its uptake be included in future annual workforce updates.

In regard to hybrid working, members noted the information provided on the Council's Hybrid Working Policy, its application, which teams have the ability to work in that way and the ways it was managed. It was confirmed that the ability to work from a number of council sites was also classed as hybrid working and that NYC employment contracts did not state the number of days an employee could work from home per week.

It was noted that operationally, information on how many people were working from home and what they were doing, was overseen by Team Leaders and Service Managers, and that decisions on the application of the council's policy on Hybrid Working were based on the needs of each service area.

The Chair thanked the officer for the presentation, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The update on hybrid working and sickness absence be noted.
- ii. A table of year on year sickness levels be circulated to committee members
- iii. Information be included in future annual workforce updates on:
 - o Staff training aimed at mitigating sickness absence.
 - o The age profile for absentees, based on reasons for sickness absence

84 Transformation Update

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Resources providing an update on the progress of the transformation activity within the council, including progress with the convergence of services, associated restructures, and the development of an updated Transformation Strategy for the Council.

Gary Fielding - Corporate Director for Resources confirmed a huge amount had happened in transformation with significant progress especially in regard to the council's enabling systems and processes. The council wide systems, such as finance and the CRM, and the ongoing convergence work had brought many teams onto single systems, and the council was now in a good position to move on to the next stage of its transformation journey.

Members noted the challenges of working on multiple IT systems at once, and in response to members questions, officers confirmed:

- A technical programme of outstanding works was currently being drawn up and would go to Management Board in January 2026
- The majority of outstanding systems would be delivered by the end of the 2025/26 fiscal year
- The council still had contractual obligations on some legacy systems
- The Council had updated a number of major systems this year which was not ideal e.g. Revenue & Benefits, the Council's financial system, its customer CRM and recruitment system
- Moving data effectively from the many legacy systems inherited was complicated, and sometimes even when data conversion was completed, the system was still not ideal – Members requested a progress update on this for a future meeting

The Committee sought clarification on the funding gap and new savings required (referenced in paragraph 2 on page 54), and Gary Fielding agreed to provide a detailed written response following the meeting.

Amani Anderson-Leefe - Assistant Director Transformation, drew members attention to the draft Transformation Strategy at Annex A aimed at driving change, improving services and ensuring the future financial sustainability for the benefit of North Yorkshire's residents, communities and businesses.

Specific attention was drawn to the three major cross cutting programmes of work within the Strategy. Members were pleased to note the workstream around 'how we will work' aimed at delivering more effective governance and less bureaucracy. They also welcomed the launch of a staff suggestion scheme recognising that employees were best placed to identify ways of increasing savings.

The Chair thanked officers for the update, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The report be noted
- ii. The draft Transformation Strategy be endorsed

- iii. A detailed written response on the funding gap and future savings required, be circulated to Committee members

85 Annual Review of Equalities Objectives

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement, providing an overview of progress with achieving the Council’s equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) objectives.

Will Boardman, Head of Strategy and Performance introduced the report and drew attention to the council’s public sector equality duties and the revised draft Equality Impact Assessment form (EIA) at Appendix 3.

Members queried the level of progress against the initiatives contributing to the achievement of the objectives detailed in the report, noting there was no comparative data from previous years. In response, Will Boardman agreed to circulate the table missing from the report at Appendix A and to include an extra column in the table containing national average data in future annual updates.

In regard to the workforce diversity data for 2024/25, Members again noted that without comparative data from previous years it was not possible to assess whether the measures being taken to improve diversity were working.

Resolved – That

- i. The annual update on progress with achieving the Council’s equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) objectives be noted.
- ii. Future annual updates should provide comparative data on workforce diversity from previous years and data on national comparators.
- iii. The revisions to the EIA form be noted.
- iv. That the Table referred to as Table A in the report be circulated to Committee members

86 Annual Performance Update on National Resilience Standards

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive Local Engagement providing an update on progress and incidents impacting emergency planning and community resilience affecting North Yorkshire Council, and an update on the use of sandbags.

Matthew Robinson - Head of Resilience and Emergencies introduced the report and drew specific attention to the overview of the council’s approach to sandbags at Appendix 3 of the report.

Members queried the cost to the council of dealing with the incidents listed in section 3 of the report and how the Council had funded them. They noted that in some cases the Council may have drawn on some external funding e.g. in the case of the Langdale fire, funding had been access from the Bellwing Fund. Officers agreed to look at it outside of the meeting and to circulate a written response.

Members noted the progress against the council’s corporate Emergency Planning Group work plan and the current position in regard to Community Emergency Plans as detailed in sections 4 and 6 of the report.

They went on to consider the Council’s current approach to the use of sandbags (shown in Appendix B of the report), and discussed the state of repair of some of the sandbag stores. Overall Members supported the current approach and agreed it should continue. They also suggested that the document at Appendix B detailing the Council’s current approach to the use of sandbags should include a table of the sandbag stores location and addresses.

Councillor David Chance asked that the condition of the store in his division be looked at as a matter of urgency.

The Chair thanked the officer for the Resilience and Emergencies Annual Update 2025, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The report be noted.
- ii. The Committee's feedback on the Council's current approach to the use of sandbags be used to inform the Council's future approach (see above)
- iii. Information on the cost to the council of dealing with the incidents listed in section 3 of the report, be circulated to committee members.

87 Work Programme

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

Having considered the discussions on previous agenda items and other developments taking place across the county, Members

Resolved – That no revisions were required to the work programme for the coming meeting on 16 March 2026.

88 Date of Next Meeting - 16 March 2026

The meeting concluded at 11.48 am.