

York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority

Minutes of the meeting held at Hudson Room, West Offices, York on Friday 23rd January 2026 commencing at 10.30 am

Present: Mayor David Skaith in the Chair, Councillor Carl Les OBE, Councillor Claire Douglas, Councillor Peter Kilbane and Councillor Gareth Dadd

In attendance: Jo Coles, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, and Councillor Kevin Foster

Officers In attendance:

YNYCA - James Farrar, Mike Russell, Rachel Antonelli, Paul Clark, Andrew Leeming, Claire Robinson and Ben Walters

NYC - Richard Flinton and Elizabeth Jackson

CYC - Ben Murphy

CA24-74 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence from members of the Combined Authority. Apologies had been received from the Director of Economy, Andy Kerr, and the Head of Business and Innovation, David Ryden. Apologies had also been received from the Chief Operating Officer of City of York Council, Ian Floyd, it was noted that Ben Murphy was attending in his place.

CA24-75 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Combined Authority held on 28 November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

CA24-76 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CA24-77 Public Participation

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

CA24-78 Mayor's Update

The Mayor provided an update on his activities since the last meeting of the Combined Authority.

The Mayor wished everyone a Happy New Year which had started well with the announcement of Northern Powerhouse Rail the previous week. He and Councillor Douglas had attended the press launch in Leeds and welcomed the role York would play in improving connectivity across the North. A faster, turn-up-and-go service between York, Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield, and eventually onwards to Manchester and Liverpool, would open up many more opportunities for people across the region. It

also strengthened the case for local priorities, such as establishing two trains per hour between York and Scarborough.

The Mayor had signed a compact with the Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, establishing York's place as part of a new Northern Growth Corridor stretching from Liverpool through Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds to York. The Mayor had continued to represent the region on the national stage, including The Great North, a collaboration of Northern Mayors, followed by UK Mayors, the mayoral equivalent of the LGA, and finally the Mayoral Council.

The Mayor had remained in close contact with the Department for Transport on the delivery of Haxby - York North Station and was pleased that, after over a year of lobbying, it had been announced that Thirsk would be included in the Access for All Scheme, the only station in Yorkshire to receive funding in that round and the government's commitment was welcomed.

The Mayor continued to visit community organisations and businesses across the region, including those that had received funding through Mayoral Investment Funds. A particular highlight had been Ryedale Special Families; having visited during its construction, the building was now open and in use construction having been supported by the Community Building Fund. Other highlights included the WOW on Walmgate in Malton, the Chain Lane Community Hub in Knaresborough and the High Street project on Walmgate, York.

The Mayor had continued to engage with visitor economy groups in the region following the announcement of the Overnight Visitor Levy. He had met the Scarborough Tourism Board, the York Tourism Advisory Board and Hospitality Association York. In the coming weeks he would meet their equivalents in Skipton, Ripon, Harrogate and Northallerton and would continue working with them to ensure the levy worked well for the region.

The Mayor had hosted the first regional Faith Leaders Roundtable in December to discuss community cohesion and hate crime incidents, and he thanked his Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime, Jo Coles, for her support with that valuable work. While trying to keep travel outside the region to a minimum, the Mayor had visited the Health on the High Street project in Barnsley to see how Barnsley Council and the NHS hospital trust had worked together to combine high street regeneration with improved access to diagnostic healthcare and he believed a similar approach would work well in many North Yorkshire communities. He welcomed the engagement from both local authorities and health bodies in developing a model suitable for York and North Yorkshire. The Mayor had spoken at the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission's Oxford Farming Conference Welcome Dinner, where he had promoted the work of the Grow Yorkshire Partnership and the role devolution could play in improving outcomes for farmers.

Finally, the Mayor had visited Leeds that week to launch the White Rose Forest Partnership, planting the first of 134 million new trees in West and North Yorkshire with Mayor Tracy Brabin.

Councillor Gareth Dadd welcomed the announcement on improved accessibility at Thirsk station and members thanked the Mayor for his work which was leading to delivery on Combined Authority commitments.

CA24-79 Receipt of Petition - Hipswell and Colburn Call For Congestion Relief on the A6136

Considered – A report of the Head of Governance presenting a petition which had been submitted to the Mayor by Councillor Kevin Foster of North Yorkshire Council, calling for congestion relief on the A6136 in Catterick and requesting Members consider their response to the petition.

The petition stated:

“We call for urgent action to deliver improvements to the Key Route Network in Colburn and Hipswell. The daily congestion is hugely disruptive to people who live and work here. It is harmful to the local economy, it is harmful to health, and it is harmful to the education of local children.

We call for investment in a relief road in any places where lower cost forms of improvements cannot alleviate congestion.

We call for investment to create better bus services with access to enough road capacity so that buses can run to timetable throughout the day.”

Councillor Kevin Foster then spoke to present his petition on behalf of residents concerned about traffic conditions on the A6136, particularly in relation to safety, reliability and the impact of existing and planned development. While the designation of the A6136 as part of the Key Road Network was welcomed, it was stated that this now required coordinated, long-term action from all partners. While some funding had been made available for improvements in Colburn, this was insufficient to address the underlying issues. Concerns were also raised about the reliability of the hourly bus service, which provided the only public transport link to Richmond and Darlington. In the short term a request was made for funding to support a 30-minute service while longer-term highway solutions were developed. The petition called for joined-up planning and clear action to deliver lasting improvements for the area.

Councillor Carl Les advised that the petition was also addressed to him as Leader of North Yorkshire Council and he had raised the issue with the local MP, who had offered to host a round table discussion with the council, the Combined Authority, the Ministry of Defence and defence estates to consider a way forward.

The Mayor acknowledged the harm to communities caused by congestion and advised that from next year the Mayoral Transport Fund would include an element of funding for congestion relief. The Mayor then moved that the petition be referred to the Transport Advisory Board for further discussion and at the request of Councillor Foster also agreed to look into the feasibility of a 30 minute frequency bus service.

Resolved (unanimously)

That the petition be referred to the next meeting of the Transport Advisory Board for further discussion.

CA24-80 Mayoral Investment Challenge Funds and Moving Forward Update

Considered – A report of the Director of Economy providing an update on the overall progress of the four Mayoral Challenge Funds and the three Mayoral funded programmes under the Moving Forward Campaign.

The Senior Programme Manager, Claire Robinson, presented the report on the £35m of investment put forward by the Mayor, and made the following key points:

- All seven programmes were now live and operating to their agreed profiles.
- Two rounds of export grants under the Business Innovation Fund had been launched, with 48 businesses in round one and positive engagement across the region.
- 19 projects were being supported under the Carbon Negative Challenge Fund, including the SeaGrown project in Scarborough.
- The Vibrant and Sustainable High Streets Fund had committed over £2.3m to 38 projects across Rounds 1 and 2, with Round 3 open for applications. Scarborough, Skipton and Selby were highlighted as having benefited from the Fund.
- The Men's Mental Health programme "Shift Your Focus" had been launched, with 79 applications received from large and small organisations.
- Next steps for the Active Travel fund were outlined, including an open call for applications commencing February 2026.

The Mayor noted the positive impact on communities and referred to the newly launched Dragons' Den style business innovation support for small businesses.

Resolved (unanimously)

That the update set out in the report on the delivery of programme activity under the Mayoral Investment Fund be noted.

CA24-81 York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Established Status Application to the MHCLG

Considered – A report of the Chief Executive setting out the benefits and criteria for designation as an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority (EMSA) and seeking approval for the Mayor to write to the MHCLG Secretary of State at the earliest possible opportunity to apply for EMSA status.

The Chief Executive, James Farrar, explained that EMSA status conferred the strongest form of devolution available and was a prerequisite for an Integrated Settlement, bringing together multiple funding streams with greater flexibility and a clearer outcomes framework. He confirmed that the Combined Authority met the published criteria for application: it had been in existence with a directly elected Mayor for at least 18 months; it had a published Local Assurance Framework approved by Government; and it was not subject to any Best Value notice or material accounting concerns. He added that the Government had invited established areas to access specific funding opportunities directly, citing the £30 million Local Innovation Partnership allocations, whereas non-established areas were required to bid competitively for smaller pots.

The Mayor expressed support for the application, which would bring more discretion on how to spend funding and mean less time would be spent on bidding for individual funds. It was noted that any future decision to enter into an Integrated Settlement would need to return to the Combined Authority for approval. Members welcomed the opportunity to apply for EMSA status and the advantages that increased devolution could bring.

Resolved

That the Combined Authority:

- 1) Endorses the case for seeking the designation as an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority.
- 2) Delegates authority to the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Mayor to oversee the preparation and submission of the application for the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority to become an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority.
- 3) Supports the Mayor applying in January 2026 for the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority to be designated with Established Status.

CA24-82 Grow Yorkshire Renewed

Considered – A report of the Director of Economy which provided an update on the reconstitution of Grow Yorkshire as an Expert Advisory Panel on Agriculture, Food and Rural Businesses and Communities, including an overview of the programme's evolution, proposed structure and next steps.

The Head of Strategy, Andrew Leeming, advised that Grow Yorkshire had been created in 2019 by the Local Enterprise Partnership and had a broad membership of food and farming interests. A 2025 Farm Study showed that 52% of farms were not economically sustainable and intervention was required. A strategic framework was proposed setting out how a more resilient sector could be created, looking at sustainability and food security and also supporting thriving rural communities. The proposed expert advisory panel would broaden the current membership of Grow Yorkshire, along with a food and farming delivery network supporting engagement with stakeholders.

Jan Thornton, the Acting Chair of Grown Yorkshire, attended the meeting and made a statement in support of the proposals:

One of the key aims of the Mayor is to transition farms to be economically and environmentally sustainable, and improve the health, wellbeing and safety of rural communities.

I'm sure you will all be very familiar with the challenges facing farmers in recent years. Many now realise that they need to diversify in order to survive.

Grow Yorkshire Network members will be well placed to both identify good practice which may be happening elsewhere as well as enable the Combined Authority to continue to be an exemplar at the forefront of leading on and demonstrating focussed support and advice to the agricultural sector, particularly in conjunction with the assets in Agritech and R&D within the region.

The newly refreshed Network will be able to provide a vast range of expertise and advice to the Combined Authority but will also play an important part in ensuring that all key players in the sector are working collectively to encourage

their respective members to get involved and undertake any new initiatives being developed.

With positive mechanisms in place such as via the Grow Yorkshire Network, associated organisations, and opportunities for public engagement, I would like to think we can build greater enthusiasm for further devolution. People are more likely to engage when they can see that support and help is being provided to encourage and enable them to thrive.

Connectivity and networking, meeting and knowing the right people to collaborate with and share ideas and information, is vital when trying to improve local services. There are so many different groups focussing on specific needs within communities, that having a key Network with a shared ambition which can pass on good practice or identify barriers will be advantageous.

Healthy vibrant rural communities need to have their housing needs met adequately and accessible local jobs, for there to be a thriving economy.

To achieve this, local job creation and thriving rural businesses are very important. There are lots of new and innovative ideas starting to develop, including a desire to raise the profile of small artisan locally sourced products as well as get local food into the public sector supply chain, which can help reduce our carbon footprint.

Jo Coles, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, acknowledged the importance of partnerships in the rural economy, including in relation to dealing with rural crime, and referred to the critical role farmers and the rural community had played in responding to the Langdale Moor fire. It was confirmed that there would be linkages with the Business Board and that Grow Yorkshire would build on the work of the Rural Commission established by North Yorkshire Council five years ago.

Resolved (unanimously)

That the Combined Authority:

- 1) approve the reconstitution of Grow Yorkshire as the Expert Advisory Panel on Agriculture, Food and Rural Businesses and Communities.
- 2) endorses the continued use of the Grow Yorkshire brand for a delivery network that involves key partners involved in delivering practical programmes across the region related to food and farming.
- 3) notes the future development of business cases for food and farming activities, to be developed by the Food and Farming Lead with guidance from the panel.

CA24-83 Innovation Framework Development - Positioning York and North Yorkshire for National Investment

Considered – A report of the Director of Economy providing an update on the strategic development of York and North Yorkshire's Innovation Framework, including progress on the Innovate UK (IUK) Local Action Plan, the regional Innovation Strategy and the Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF) bid. Endorsement was sought for the

proposed approval process and the Combined Authority's convening role in driving innovation-led growth was confirmed.

The Head of Strategy, Andrew Leeming, stated that the framework was based around (i) developing an Innovate UK action plan aligning to the Local Growth Plan and setting out what actions would be taken, (ii) convening an innovation leadership alliance of universities, businesses and local authorities, known as a triple helix, and (iii) establishing a task and finish group overseen by the Business Board to ensure that business voices are heard in the discussion. An Innovation Strategy would then be presented to the Combined Authority in the summer. It was confirmed that the University of York would lead the region's Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF) bid, with the Combined Authority providing strategic oversight as the accountable public authority.

Resolved (unanimously)

That the Combined Authority:

- 1) Endorses the York and North Yorkshire Innovation Framework.
- 2) Delegates approval to the Director of Economy in consultation with the Mayor for the final approval of the Innovate UK Local Action Plan
- 3) Notes that the regional Innovation Strategy will be brought to a future Combined Authority meeting for approval.
- 4) Endorses the University of York's submission of the region's Local Innovation Partnership Fund bid, that will be developed in partnership with the Combined Authority and other key stakeholders.

CA24-84 Draft Mayor's General Budget and Precept Proposals

Considered – A report of the Mayor of York and North Yorkshire setting out the draft proposals for the Mayor's General Budget and precept proposals for 2026/27 for consideration by the Combined Authority before final approval by the Combined Authority on 6 February 2026. Powers and responsibilities relating to Fire and Rescue services across North Yorkshire fell within the Mayor's general powers and the Mayor's General Budget was managed directly by the Mayor, working with the Combined Authority, to ensure regional needs and priorities were met. The proposals for 2026/27 solely comprised budgets for the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, which had previously fallen to the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

In introducing the report the Mayor made the following key points:

- The proposed Mayoral General Precept was set out at paragraph 3.7 and was budgeted to raise £38.2m of income for the Fire Service. This equated to a precept charge of £116.62 for a Band D property, which was £9.72 per month, a £9.60 (80p per month) increase compared to the Fire and Rescue Authority precept levied in 2025/26.
- The proposal had been shaped by three principles: applying the minimum possible burden on local taxpayers; maintaining effective, well-managed public services that kept people safe and delivered value for money; and delivering on agreed local priorities, including road safety.

- Over 2,600 responses had been received to the public consultation, 57% of respondents supported a precept at this level. A value for money letter from the Chief Fire Officer had also been considered, which set out his view of the impact the precept would have at each of the proposed values.
- The Langdale Moor fire had put a strain on the finances of the fire service. The capital investment programme was also a factor with four new fire stations and 16 new appliances being provided.
- The Mayor and Deputy Mayor continued to lobby the Housing Secretary in relation to the local government finance settlement, calling for fire authority funding to reflect our rural needs.
- The North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel had considered and endorsed unanimously the proposals at its meeting on Wednesday.

The Director of Resources and s73 officer, Mike Russell, confirmed that the purpose of the report was to meet the Mayor's statutory requirement to present the draft budget before 31 January as part of the budget setting process providing an opportunity to review and comment on the proposals before they were finalised. Final approval of the budget would take place on 6 February 2026 once the Mayor had formally considered any feedback received from the Panel and the Combined Authority.

The recent Local Government Finance Settlement confirmed a reduction of almost 25% in Government grant funding for North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service over three years, which was equivalent to around 6.5% of the Service's overall budget and which created a structural gap that could not be bridged through efficiencies alone. The proposed precept increase would raise £38.2m next year which would ensure the service could remain financially stable. Appendix 5 of the report set out the legal process for approval of the Mayor's draft General Budget.

Councillor Dadd referred to the historically low precept base, the challenges set up in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the 25% cut in government funding over 3 years, and it was confirmed that the change in settlement had affected the precept calculation for 2026/27. Had previous assumptions remained in place, financial modelling would have aligned with the earlier proposal for a £6 increase. Councillor Dadd confirmed that he was not critical of the Mayor or Deputy Mayor's actions, only the Government, in relation to the settlement and resultant funding situation.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor referred to the operational pressures faced during the Langdale Moor wildfire, the largest in living memory in the area and observed that it had required every regional appliance and national assistance, and that without last year's precept decision the Service's financial position would have been untenable. An invoice for £2.8m had been submitted to the government under the Bellwin scheme to recover costs incurred. The Deputy Mayor agreed to circulate assurances provided by the Chief Fire Officer regarding efficiency and value for money and that was welcomed by Members.

Resolved (unanimously)

That the Combined Authority:

- 1) Support the Mayor's proposal to implement a Mayoral General Precept of £116.62 (Band D) comprising Fire and Rescue Functions.

- 2) Note the proposed Mayor's General budget for 2026/27 set out in this report (including used of reserves) together with the calculation of the precepts and Council Tax rates set out therein.
- 3) Note the proposed overall budget for the Fire and Rescue Service for 2026/27 covered by the Mayoral Precept and the medium-term financial position for the Fire and Rescue Service
- 4) Consider whether they would wish to submit any written comments to the Mayor in line with the Legal Process and Timeline outlined at Appendix 5 of this report
- 5) Note that at its meeting on 6th February 2025 the budget will be resubmitted for approval with any updates and changes to funding that may arise as a result of clarification of funding and settlements.

CA24-85 Forward Plan

Considered – The Combined Authority's Forward Plan was presented.

Resolved

That the Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.11 pm