

North Yorkshire Council

Audit Committee

16 March 2026

Annual Partnership Governance Report

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the governance of partnerships involving North Yorkshire Council.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The aim of the annual report is to enable the Audit Committee to assess the effectiveness of the Council's partnerships and receive assurance that appropriate governance arrangements are in place. The process of preparing the annual report also provides a regular opportunity to review the Council's partnerships to ensure that they (and the resulting commitments) are compatible with the Council's priorities and add value to the work of the Council.
- 2.2 The Council's Constitution, Financial Procedure Rules and Partnership Governance Guidance require that approval is given before any commitment is made towards a partnership arrangement involving the Council.
- 2.3 Partnerships can be defined in a number of ways. Partnerships usually involve the Council and other organisations working together, as well as one or more of the following:
- A joint plan or work programme
 - A joint budget or an application for external funding
 - The arrangement has a name and notes of meetings are taken and circulated
- 2.4 Monitoring partnership governance allows the Council to:
- Ensure cost effective, value for money and efficient use of time and resources
 - Minimise any potential risks, including reputational risk for the Council
 - Reduce the potential for duplication, where individual partnerships are working towards the same goal, by aligning resources to improve the final outcome, accelerate progress and improve efficiency

3.0 PARTNERSHIPS IN SCOPE FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT

- 3.1 Partnerships in scope for this report meet one or more of the following criteria:
- The Council's financial contribution to the partnership is expected to exceed £200,000 per annum. In calculating the Council's financial contribution any grant or external funding for which the Council is acting as the Accountable body is included in the total.
 - The partnership is a statutory requirement or is needed to discharge a statutory duty.
 - The partnership is identified as very high or high risk using the Partnership Governance Risk Assessment.
- 3.2 The annual report does not cover other arrangements such as outside organisations to which the council appoints members, contracts with suppliers, companies in which the Council is the sole or majority shareholder, and joint committees with other local authorities.

4.0 KEY FINDINGS

- 4.1 Appendix A (Register of Significant Partnerships) list the 36 partnerships in scope for the annual report as of 24 February 2026. The number and nature of partnerships changes from time to time and, as with all annual reports, the data within the appendix is a snapshot on one date.
- 4.2 Appendix A summarises information on governance and reporting arrangements for each partnership, together with their key achievements, issues and priorities.
- 4.3 The Register includes 18 statutory partnerships, 24 partnerships instrumental in influencing policy and 15 instrumental in controlling finance and resources. Note some partnerships appear in multiple categories.
- 4.4 No partnerships were identified as having an overall risk rating of very high or high. However, the Yorkshire Bathing Water Partnership was identified as medium high risk and eleven partnerships were identified as medium risk.
- 4.5 No partnerships have reported a governance failure over the past year.
- 4.6 A governance review of the Yorkshire Bathing Water Partnership was undertaken February/ March 2025. As a result of this a new Board, Strategic Steering Group, Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and working groups have now been established. An independent chair is also to be sought to sit on the partnership.
- 4.7 A review of the Health and Wellbeing Board membership and function is underway, with final proposals to be agreed March 2026.
- 4.8 A Governance Review of North Yorkshire, York and North York Moors Mineral and Waste Plan Partnership is to be undertaken in summer 2026.
- 4.9 Integrated Services with the NHS (including Harrogate and Rural Alliance and, Integrated Quality Team) governance arrangements are to be reviewed 2026/27.

5.0 ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE TO MONITOR PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE

- 5.1 Each directorate gives regular consideration to the governance and monitoring arrangements of partnerships.
- 5.2 The constitution outlines the current arrangements in place for monitoring partnership governance:

All partnerships with outside bodies must be properly evaluated before they are entered into, and be supported by appropriate governance, accounting and audit arrangements. No partnership should be considered unless it can be shown that there are clear benefits to the Council and the proposed arrangement is compatible with the Council's aims and objectives.

The form of partnership may also differ. Partnerships involving joint decision making and the sharing of budgets and other resources to deliver services will require a formal agreement. Other partnerships will be more informal and simply provide a forum to share information and to consult on future plans.

The Council's partnership governance risk assessment must be completed whenever a partnership is being considered. Any proposed arrangement which is assessed as high or medium risk should then be subject to a full assessment using the approved

partnership governance guidance and toolkit. In addition, a full assessment must be completed for all cases where the Council's financial contribution to the partnership is expected to exceed £200,000 per annum. In calculating the Council's financial contribution any grant or external funding for which the Council is acting as the Accountable Body should be included in the total.

Other partnerships will be expected to adopt appropriate governance arrangements.

- 5.3 The governance arrangements of all partnerships with a very high, high, high medium or medium overall risk rating are reviewed by officers from Legal Services to ensure that robust arrangements are in place to protect the interests of the partnership and, in particular, of the Council.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- i) To note the contents of this report and Register of Significant Partnerships.

Rachel Joyce
Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement

Report Author – Alaina Kitching, Strategy and Performance Manager