

North Yorkshire Council

Thirsk & Malton Area Committee

12 June 2026

Update on Double Devolution

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive Local Engagement

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To respond to the Area Committee's request for an information report providing an update on Double Devolution.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides an update on the progress of Double Devolution proposals across North Yorkshire, including original expressions of interest (EOIs), and outlines a proposed way forward linked to a new Community Transfer Policy.
- 2.2 The Double Devolution Pilot programme includes a range of proposals at different stages, with over half (five of nine) either agreed or progressing towards agreement and implementation. The remainder are either under development, subject to further clarification, aligned to other processes, or not being progressed.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The former North Yorkshire County Council's submission to government for the establishment of a unitary council set out a commitment to pilot double devolution and provide opportunities for town and parish councils and community groups that would like to manage services and assets on behalf of the new council. It stated that all instances of double devolution would need to have a solid business case and delivery plan and be cost neutral to the new council. It also stated that double devolution would be piloted in a small number of areas, and that it would be very unlikely that any transfer would take place before April 2024.
- 3.2 To pilot this approach, an invitation was sent in late November 2022, to all town and parish councils inviting them to submit expressions of interest by the end March 2023 if they would like to participate in the piloting of double devolution.
- 3.3 The twelve Expressions of Interest (EOIs) received were considered by the Executive at meeting held on 17 October 2023. The outcomes as agreed at this meeting are summarised below.

a) EOIs not recommended to progress (3):

These councils failed to meet key criteria (notably legal competence and/or financial viability), and are therefore not progressing to full business case:

- Settle Town Council
- Little Ouseburn Parish Council

- Stokesley Town Council

b) EOIs recommended to progress to full business case (5):

These Expressions of Interest met the required criteria and could move forward without changes:

- Malton Town Council
- Northallerton and Thirsk Town Councils
- Richmond Town Council
- Filey Town Council
- Knaresborough Town Council

c) EOIs where it was recommended to progress with amendments (2):

These proposals are broadly suitable but require specific elements to be removed to ensure financial sustainability and alignment with strategic objectives:

- Skipton Town Council
- Whitby Town Council

d) Complex/ambitious EOIs where it was recommended to set up project teams to develop proposals Councils (2):

- Selby Town Council
- Ripon City Council

4.0 CURRENT POSITION: DOUBLE DEVOLUTION PILOT PROPOSALS AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY TRANSFER POLICY/TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Current Position: Double Devolution Pilot Proposals

4.1 The table below provides a summary of all the proposals that could potentially be developed (listed at b) to d) above).

Parish Council	Details of proposal	Status
Malton	Management of Malton Market Place public conveniences	Agreed by Executive, agreement not to implement made post Executive decision
Knaresborough	Management of the weekly market	Agreed by Executive and progressing towards implementation
Ripon	Leasehold transfer of Ripon Town Hall	Agreed by Executive and progressing towards implementation
Ripon	Transfer of High Ripley Hall & Wakeman's House	Progressing ahead of Executive decision
Filey	Transfer of management of benches	Bench data and legal agreement covering transfer being finalised
Selby	Potential transfer of a number of parks/open spaces, buildings including community centres	Sites appropriate for local devolution confirmed with Selby Town Council and relevant site-specific information shared - STC invited to submit a business case

Northallerton & Thirsk	Joint venture to manage the local markets	Financial information shared with Northallerton Town Council, Thirsk likely descope from proposal, further work required to confirm whether Town Council intend to progress proposal
Whitby	Provision and management of parks and grounds maintenance and floral displays (excluding highways verges) including Pannett Park, equipment and depot space	Further work required to confirm whether the Town Council intend to progress proposal
Skipton	Management of the Ginnel Woods and Canal Basin	Development of proposals at these sites now aligned with Town Investment Plan process, further work required to confirm whether Town Council intend to progress proposal
Richmond	Management of The Friary Gardens	Not progressing

Current Position: Development Of Community Transfer Policy/Transitional Arrangements

- 4.2 The Council is in the process of developing a new Community Transfer Policy to support its local empowerment ambitions and provide a more consistent framework for the transfer of assets and services. The policy is intended to bring together existing approaches, including Double Devolution, into a single framework; however, any formal decision on its adoption and the future of current arrangements is yet to be taken. The proposed approach would introduce a clearer, staged process with defined governance and decision points, and is designed to support a range of potential delivery models and locally appropriate outcomes.
- 4.3 The emerging policy reflects a flexible approach, enabling both proactive and reactive opportunities for asset and service transfer. This would allow proposals to come forward either through Council-led activity, such as service reviews or asset rationalisation, or through community-led expressions of interest where local organisations identify a need or opportunity. It also recognises the role that Town and Parish Councils can play as important local partners in facilitating or delivering these arrangements, including working collaboratively with other local stakeholders.
- 4.4 The approach is intended to promote transparency, early consideration of key issues such as financial viability and organisational capacity, and clearer expectations around process and timescales. It is also being developed to ensure that a broad range of organisations can engage, with proportionate support and flexibility built into potential arrangements.
- 4.5 In terms of transitional arrangements, it is proposed that the Council would continue to work with those currently within the Double Devolution pilot programme, to progress proposals where possible. An indicative timeframe of 31 March 2027 has been identified to support this process, after which there may be an opportunity to submit further proposals in-line with new arrangements, subject to future decisions.
- 4.6 The draft Community Transfer Policy is scheduled to be considered by the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 June 2026, with any subsequent recommendations and approval of the Policy to be considered by the Executive on 14 July 2026.

5.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The report is provided in response to a work request from the Area Committee for an update on Double Devolution.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) That the Area Committee notes the Double Devolution update and the proposed transitional approach linked to the emerging Community Transfer Policy, including working with pilot organisations to progress existing proposals within indicative timescales, or alternatively inviting submission of a new Expression of Interest under the new framework.

Assistant Chief Executive Local Engagement
Thirsk & Malton Area Committee 12 June 2026
Council Chamber
Ryedale House
Malton
YO17 7HH

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Presenter of Report – n/a for information only

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.