

North Yorkshire Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Committee

4 June 2026

Harrogate, Knaresborough and Boroughbridge Town Investment Plan update

Report of the Corporate Director of Community Development

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Area Constituency Committee on progress with the development of Town Investment Plans (TIPs) for Harrogate, Knaresborough and Boroughbridge, with details on the emerging Harrogate and Knaresborough TIP vision and priority projects, consultation evidence and project prioritisation work and ongoing engagement in Boroughbridge.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The North Yorkshire Council Economic Growth Strategy 2024–2029 includes a commitment to develop investment plans for the county’s towns and their hinterlands, or to refresh existing plans, to drive economic growth and productivity in line with the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and other key strategies. Town Investment Plans for key urban centres and market towns form part of the suite of documents required to move the Economic Growth Strategy from high-level ambition into delivery on the ground.
- 2.2 Within this framework, work is underway to prepare TIPs for Harrogate, Knaresborough and Boroughbridge, providing an evidence base for future business cases and coordinated investment across the area.
- 2.3 The Town Investment Plan programme provides a coordinated, place-based framework for regeneration and investment, helping the Council and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority to understand local investment priorities and opportunities. The programme is intended to act as an evidence base for future funding bids and business cases, and to guide decisions by public, private and community partners over the medium to long term.
- 2.4 TIPs are being developed through active collaboration, bringing together business networks, community and voluntary organisations, developers, public sector agencies and other stakeholders, with co-design and community participation as core principles.
- 2.5 Across the three towns, the focus is on identifying real, positive changes that will help neighbourhoods to thrive and improve quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors. The three TIPs sit within the North Yorkshire Council Economic Growth Strategy 2024–2029 and are part of the wider suite of documents that turn county-wide ambitions into delivery, alongside the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and other key strategies. Because they are being developed to a common methodology, with shared criteria and programme themes, they provide a coordinated, place-based framework for regeneration and investment rather than isolated plans.

2.6 For Harrogate and Knaresborough in particular, this creates clear opportunities to design linked interventions along shared corridors and within functional economic and travel-to-work areas – for example, complementary bus enhancements, connected active-travel routes, joined-up visitor and heritage offers, and aligned skills and employment initiatives that recognise the way people live, work and move across the two towns. As Knaresborough’s engagement findings and project list mature, officers will be able to bring forward more explicit “twin-town” packages that maximise local benefits while strengthening the collective case to the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority and other funders.

3.0 HARROGATE TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

3.1 The Harrogate TIP is now underpinned by a substantial mixed-method engagement programme delivered from autumn 2025 to early 2026, including nearly 600 survey responses, themed workshops, Member sessions, Youth Council and school engagements, and targeted engagement with various local groups. This has generated a robust evidence base that reflects the views of residents and businesses across age groups and communities, including young residents and people who live in surrounding settlements but rely on Harrogate for work and services.

3.2 An emerging vision is taking shape around Harrogate as a “heritage-led wellness destination” that combines its Victorian spa character, strong green-space offer and cultural assets with modern, inclusive infrastructure and opportunities. Work is underway to translate this vision into a phased programme of quick-win interventions, medium-term programmes and longer-term strategic projects, supported by an emerging Advisory Board to help refine priorities, oversee project development and champion the TIP with partners and funders.

3.3 Consultation findings show a high level of pride in Harrogate’s distinctiveness, but also a clear sense that the town needs to adapt to remain attractive and inclusive. People consistently highlight:

- Heritage and built environment: attractive historic buildings and a traditional spa-town character that must be protected and better celebrated.
- Green spaces and nature: the Stray, Valley Gardens, Harlow Carr and local parks as core assets, alongside the wider countryside setting.
- Safety and cleanliness: Harrogate is widely perceived as safe and pleasant, which is integral to its appeal.
- Cultural and leisure offer: the Theatre, Royal Hall, Harrogate Convention Centre and festivals as important strengths, with appetite for a more defined cultural quarter and more year-round events.

3.4 Respondents also describe a series of challenges:

- Public realm and town centre: parts of the town centre are seen as “tatty and tired”, with worn paving, hard landscaping, lack of shade, surface-water flooding and prominent empty buildings, including former department stores and some council-owned assets.
- Economy, jobs and business conditions: job and training opportunities are often rated “poor” or “very poor”, with many residents commuting out for better pay and prospects and high business costs seen as major barriers to independent businesses.
- Youth provision and inclusion: respondents highlight under-provision of youth clubs, safe hang-out spaces and affordable indoor activities (e.g. bowling, ice rink, trampoline and family attractions), and a desire for community infrastructure that reflects all age groups, not just older residents.

- Housing and infrastructure: concerns focus on affordability, the perceived quality and character of some recent estates, and the sense that roads, schools, GP practices and local services are not keeping pace with growth.
- Transport and movement: congestion, roadworks and parking charges are recurring themes, alongside mixed views on cycling infrastructure and calls for improved bus connectivity (including evenings and links to surrounding towns such as Skipton, Ilkley and Otley).

3.5 The consultation evidence points to a set of headline priorities for the Harrogate TIP:

- Protect and enhance heritage and green spaces: invest in high-quality public realm, green-blue infrastructure, protection and reuse of historic buildings, and imaginative use of parks.
- Revitalise the town-centre economy and public realm: tackle tired streetscapes, vacant units and upper floors, and create a more vibrant, mixed-use town centre with active ground floors and improved evening economy.
- Improve transport, active travel and access: address congestion and parking pressures, improve bus services and connections, and deliver safer, more coherent walking and cycling routes into and through the town.
- Expand youth, leisure and wellbeing provision: create more inclusive and affordable facilities, activities and support for young people, families and those on lower incomes, including mental-health and wellbeing support.

These themes directly inform the project pipeline in the prioritisation exercise, ensuring a strong consultation fit for shortlisted schemes.

3.6 The Harrogate TIP project longlist has been put through a structured prioritisation process using a two-stage “sift” framework.

- Sift 1 – eligibility and programme fit: projects must align with at least one TIP programme theme (Enabling Enterprise; A Sustainable Settlement; Protecting Heritage and Promoting Growth; Resilient and Improving Social and Personal Well-being) and be realistically deliverable within the indicative timeframes.
- Sift 2 – scoring against eight criteria: eligible projects are scored against strategic fit, community-consultation fit, economic impact, social wellbeing, climate-change impact, deliverability/realism, value for money and legacy, with scores summed across criteria and assessors to give a total ranking.

This process allows projects to be rank and provides a transparent rationale for why some schemes progress more quickly than others, while still retaining a broader “pipeline” for future opportunities. The highest-scoring projects collectively provide a balanced response to the consultation evidence, covering town-centre renewal, transport, youth and wellbeing, green infrastructure, skills and enterprise.

3.7 Each project emerging from the TIP that requires council investment will be subject to its own business case, financial appraisal, legal checks and decision-making through existing governance routes, ensuring alignment with council budgets and risk appetite.

3.8 The project priority list is being currently refined, and it will be shared with the Members and Advisory Group in the coming weeks. There will be further opportunities to engage with the vision and priority projects in the upcoming months. The draft Harrogate plan will be presented to Members by the end of 2026.

4.0 KNARESBOROUGH TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

- 4.1 Progress on the Knaresborough Town Investment Plan (TIP) has advanced significantly over the past period, with Gateway 1 (Strategic Case) completed, presented, and signed off by the Programme Board in April 2026. This stage has focused on establishing a robust evidence base and strategic context for the Plan, drawing on a wide range of national, regional and local strategies, alongside detailed local analysis and engagement. The work confirms that the TIP is well aligned with priorities around sustainable growth, town centre vitality, health and wellbeing, and heritage-led regeneration, positioning it as a key delivery mechanism for both North Yorkshire Council and York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority ambitions.
- 4.2 A comprehensive evidence review has been undertaken to understand Knaresborough's current position, strengths and challenges. This has highlighted that, while the town is a relatively successful and attractive market town, it is facing increasing pressure from housing growth, infrastructure constraints and accessibility issues. Key challenges include congestion at known pinch points, the need to strengthen town centre vitality, and the ongoing management of important heritage and environmental assets such as the riverside and historic core. At the same time, the evidence reinforces the importance of protecting Knaresborough's distinct character and ensuring that future growth is coordinated with infrastructure, services and place quality.
- 4.3 A significant programme of stakeholder and community engagement has been delivered to complement the evidence base and ensure that the TIP reflects local priorities. This has included discussions with Knaresborough Town Council, targeted engagement with community and business groups, multiple public drop-in sessions, and a public survey which received 135 responses. Early feedback highlights consistent themes around the need for better coordination of growth and infrastructure, improvements to accessibility and movement, and a desire to focus on practical, deliverable interventions that build on the town's existing strengths rather than large-scale transformation.
- 4.4 Building on this combined evidence and engagement, a clear set of emerging themes has been identified to guide the next stage of the TIP. These include strengthening Knaresborough's sense of place through heritage and culture, improving town centre functionality and vitality, addressing movement and accessibility challenges, and ensuring that growth is aligned with infrastructure and environmental capacity. There is also a strong emphasis on managing key assets such as the market and River Nidd, and on delivering practical, phased interventions that can demonstrate early impact while contributing to long-term resilience.
- 4.5 The programme is now transitioning into the next phase of work, focused on project identification and prioritisation. A longlist of potential interventions has been developed and a structured prioritisation matrix is being applied to assess projects against strategic fit, deliverability and impact, ensuring a robust and transparent approach to shortlisting. This phase will be supported by further internal collaboration and engagement with stakeholders, with the aim of developing a clear, deliverable set of priority projects and an agreed vision for the town over the coming months.
- 4.6 Overall, the Knaresborough TIP is progressing in line with the agreed programme, with strong foundations now established through evidence and engagement. The focus will now shift towards refining priorities, developing a clear project pipeline, and ensuring the Plan is positioned to secure funding and deliver tangible improvements for residents, businesses and visitors.

5.0 BOROUGHBIDGE TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

- 5.1 Boroughbridge follows the same core methodology as other towns, with a place-based evidence review, stakeholder mapping and a programme of engagement to inform a draft vision and longlist of projects. This work is being led by the Localities team, with support from Regeneration officers.
- 5.2 There are a number of public engagement events planned in the upcoming weeks, including community consultation events on Saturday 6th June at Boroughbridge Library and Wednesday, 17 June at Methodist Church. There is a separate event organised with the local Chamber of Commerce on 4 June. An online survey is live until 30 June 2026, to capture views from residents and businesses who cannot attend in-person events.
- 5.3 Feedback from these activities will be analysed to identify what people value about Boroughbridge, key challenges and opportunities, and to inform early vision-setting and project ideas for the TIP.
- 5.4 Further updates on emerging themes, draft vision options and potential interventions for Knaresborough will be brought to future meetings once the engagement phase is complete and analysis has been undertaken.

6.0 FINANCIAL, LEGAL, EQUALITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Harrogate TIP engagement has deliberately sought to involve a wide range of voices to ensure that diverse needs and perspectives inform the emerging vision and project concepts. Similar attention to equalities, community participation and climate resilience is incorporated into the development of the Knaresborough and Boroughbridge TIPs as engagement and project scoping progresses.
- 6.2 At this stage, the TIPs are being developed as strategic frameworks and evidence bases, and there is no commitment to specific capital or revenue expenditure beyond existing budgets for strategy and engagement activity.
- 6.3 Any future projects emerging from the TIPs that require Council investment will be subject to separate business cases, detailed financial appraisal and decision-making through the Council's governance processes.
- 6.4 Legal implications, including any procurement or statutory consents, will be assessed at individual project level as schemes move from concept to delivery, with early consideration given through the TIP process where relevant.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Harrogate and Knaresborough TIPs are progressing well, underpinned by extensive engagement and a strong emerging vision that reflects both the town's heritage strengths and its contemporary challenges and opportunities.
- 7.2 Boroughbridge is at an earlier stage, with engagement underway.
- 7.3 The three TIPs will collectively support delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy and help to guide future investment decisions across the Harrogate, Knaresborough and Boroughbridge area over the coming years.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) That the Area Constituency Committee notes the progress made in developing Town Investment Plans for Harrogate, Knaresborough and Boroughbridge.
- b) That Members provide any views on the emerging vision options and priorities for Harrogate to inform the next stage of TIP development and project prioritisation
- c) That Members note the engagement activity underway in Boroughbridge and indicate any additional local priorities or stakeholder groups that should be considered as the TIPs progress.

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