

# North Yorkshire Councillor annual report 2025/26

## Foreword

As we start the new municipal year it feels much has changed but the challenges are very much a continuation from the previous year.

The new Combined Authority (CA) is now implementing their developing policy book as the new local political landscape beds in and roles and responsibilities are assumed between the Mayoral office and North Yorkshire Council. Changes include tax raising powers for the Mayoral office along with evolving strategic transport policies that may well see further cuts to the NYC highways budget.

Other changes include implementation of a county wide parking policy, roll out of a standardised waste collection service and more recently a review of public conveniences that aspires to not only secure facilities but improve them.

## Finance

The financial pressures being brought to bear on Local Government have not only continued but increased with the publication of the ironically named “Fairer funding formula” (FFF) that lays out the funding settlement North Yorkshire Council will receive for the next three years. This has resulted in yet further cuts to revenue at a time when inflationary pressures continue to increase across the whole economy with little sign of inflation falling in the immediate future.

This continued pressure will inevitably mean the Council will seek to provide services in ever more cost-efficient ways, but also review the non-statutory services, many traditionally provided at the discretion of the former District, Borough and County councils. This, along with the evolving asset rationalisation program, will look to seek out the remaining marginal financial benefits of Local Government reorganisation.

To give context of the NYC estate across the County, made up of 3475 buildings over 2491 sites:

- Annual budget for maintaining the estate and undertaking compliance checks c£8million (i.e. less than £2,500 per building)
  - Over 18,000 pieces of equipment to service, monitor and maintain within our buildings
  - Average of 45 new issues at properties reported every day (circa 12,000 per annum)

Business rates have again increased for many as the changes to the relief schemes outlined in the budget filter down. This has meant many small businesses, which make up the majority of our local economic activity in Craven, will now be paying property business rates for the first time since full relief was brought in during the pandemic. Those that may not have qualified for the full reduction will also have seen substantial increases in their rates, so now more than ever it is important that we look to support our local businesses and the jobs they provide to our communities.

Domestic Rates have increased by 4.99% this year, the threshold above which a costly referendum would be required to implement. Of this, 2% is ring fenced for the adult social care budget and the remainder to the general fund. While this is a not an insubstantial increase, it will still fail to make up the shortfall in funding created by FFF and broader inflationary pressures.

Indications are this level of annual increase will continue throughout the period covered under this current FFF period, given the suggestions from the treasury are a year on year 4.99% increase is assumed as part of their calculations and a failure to implement that figure will be an indication of surplus leading to a further cut to the Settlement grant the following year.

Another emerging potential financial pressure on NYC is the recent announcement by the Mayor of his intention to top slice the nationally formulated Highways budget for the CA area to create his own “pothole fund” and a pot for undetermined improvements. Despite some initial increase in funding from Central Government for highways improvements this year, this proposal will mean £20m+ less funding for highways in North Yorkshire over the next 4 years. This is unacceptable and we believe unlawful under the Mayoral CA constitution and is now under challenge by NYC.

Overall challenging financial times continue but we will endeavour to protect and support residents from the worst effects, supporting services to the most vulnerable as a priority. To help explain the latest budget, below are links to a YouTube presentation by the Finance Director and a NYC FAQ page around the latest Government settlement:

<https://youtu.be/rdbwjCcPiDM>

[www.northyorks.gov.uk/budgetPTC](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/budgetPTC)

## **Communities**

Following the last round of budget cuts the decision was taken to reduce the Locality grant budget to £5k per annum for each Councillor. While this has had an impact on the level of support I have been able to provide for projects in the last year, I have still been able to deliver substantial support to a range of groups and will be able to deliver a further £5k in the coming municipal year.

Below are the projects supported this year (inc. overrun from 24/25):

- Giggleswick with Settle Mothers' Union branch

£500 "Stepping Stones", Mothers and Toddlers group

- Langcliffe Singers

£1000 40th anniversary commission

- 1st Clapham & Austwick Brownies and Guides

£700 Community Litter Awareness Project

- Horton-in-Ribblesdale and District Show Committee

£750 Horton-in-Ribblesdale and District Show - Public space improvements

- Giggleswick Parish Council

£900 Purchase gardening equipment for community use

- Settle Primary School

£760 Settle DIY SOS (Early Years Outdoor Area)

- Settle Cricket Club

£2500 Practise nets for Settle Cricket Club Marshfield Ground

## **Committee work**

My work on NYC committees has continued with my Chairmanship of the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny (TEEE O&S).

This year the committee has considered a range of issues for consideration, comment or consultation including:

- Parking Principles - seeking views on the proposed Parking Principles document ahead of it being reported to the Executive.
- Report of the Crustacean Deaths Working Group - a summary of the comprehensive investigation undertaken by the Crustacean Deaths Working

Group (CDWG) into the mass mortality event along the Northeast coast of England in late 2021.

- Review of Household Waste Recycling Centres - seeking member approval to: implement a registration scheme that limits free use of North Yorkshire Household Waste Recycling Centres to North Yorkshire residents, and allow owners of commercial-like vehicles up to 12 visits per annum free of charge to Household Waste Recycling Centres.
- Update on the York and North Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) - To provide an update on the LNRS following the recent statutory public consultation. To outline the next steps including the timeline to publish the LNRS and the transition to delivery.
- Service Update – Economic Development, Regeneration, Tourism - To provide the Committee with a progress update on the activities and strategic priorities of the Council’s Economic Development, Regeneration and Tourism services. To outline and seek Committee views on emerging work to develop a pipeline of North Yorkshire Capital Growth Priorities, to feed into strategic work with the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- Draft Speed Management Strategy - To share the draft NYC Speed Management Strategy with the Committee for their consideration and comment.
- North Yorkshire Council Enforcement Policy - seek views from members of the committee on the proposed North Yorkshire Council Enforcement Policy ahead of it being reported to the Executive.
- Allerton Waste Recovery Park (AWRP) 2024-25 performance - update on AWRP performance for the 2024-25 Contract Year.
- Harbours Strategy - seek views on the proposed North Yorkshire Council Harbours Strategy ahead of it being reported to the Executive.
- Review of Public Conveniences Working Group – Looking at the Public Convenience facilities across the county and the policy relating to their future provision with recommendations to the Executive committee for adoption.

I have also worked as part of the Boundary Review Working Group charged with forming recommendations to go forward for consideration by the Boundary Commission as to the number of NYC divisions and Councillors ahead of the 2027 elections. This work is now complete with the full report available on this link: [https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/north\\_yorkshire\\_final\\_recommendations\\_report.pdf](https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/north_yorkshire_final_recommendations_report.pdf)

**2026/27 and beyond**

This will be the final year of my current term, the first full term of the new Council, and much has happened. I fully intend on standing for re-election next year in the newly expanded and renamed NYC Settle Division, which will now include the parishes of Lawkland, Feizor and Austwick.

But in the year to come there will still be much to do with the key issues being:

- Development of the NYC Local Plan - We continue to prepare the Local Plan to deliver the government imposed target of 4200+ houses every year outside the National Parks.
- Continued cost pressures of SEND and adult care provision - We are working with more than 1500 children with SEND at any one time. 80% of children needing an assessment are assessed within the 20 week timescale.
- Tourist Tax – If implemented, how it will be applied and look but more importantly the potential impact on an already embattled hospitality and tourism sector.
- This new Government has little understanding of the costs of delivering services in rural areas, even saying there is no evidence for it. The loss of Rural Support Grant alone has hit us hard, over £14m per annum. Which combined with the FFF and associated pressures is a £40m loss per annum and rising. Fortunately, we have made £63m of savings from LGR. This could have been used to invest in services and facilities or reduce Council Tax, but has had to be used to prop up the revenue budget, along with £17m of reserves formerly prudently gathered up for one-off capital projects.
- There is still a national shortage of qualified planning officers but we continue to aggressively seek to fill positions through recruitment and in house training. In planning enforcement we dealt with more than 1900 cases last year including some successful court cases, one resulting in a fine of £25k and all our expenses paid.

### **And finally, some good news**

- We have received a good CQC inspection for Adult Services, 81/100, 3rd highest nationally.
- We are investing £60m in dedicated care and support hubs, and a new programme for prevention called Prevention Plus. These are Invest to Save initiatives, designed to save money in the long term.
- We are working with the NHS to reduce hospital stays and get people home sooner.
- All second homes Council Tax premium is being allocated to housing initiatives. We are still the only council in England to do so. We continue to

seek to provide fit for purpose social housing across our portfolio and support/enable new units to be built across the county.

- The Blubberhouses bypass scheme on the A59 is nearing completion so ending years of landslips leading to road closures.
- We will introduce a lane rental scheme to speed up utility works on the Highway network.