

COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 10 December 2025

AGENDA ITEM 9 – WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

1	<p>Question from Councillor Safdar to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment – Councillor A U Pinnock</p> <p>“During recent community cleanups a number of volunteers, including Cllr Vickers and I, have noticed quite a few nitrous oxide canisters dumped in residential areas. Many across our town are also concerned about an increasingly high number of road traffic accidents and antisocial behaviour linked to such drug abuse. According to the National Poisons Information Service (NPIS), enquiries about recreational nitrous oxide misuse grew by 144% in 2022–23, with most users being very young (average age ~ 21.8 years) with figures rising ever since.</p> <p>We are aware that West Yorkshire Police and local health partners have started to address the rising misuse of nitrous oxide canisters across our communities, particularly the increasing concerns about drivers using nitrous oxide while behind the wheel. What additional enforcement, public-health education, and prevention measures are being considered to protect residents in affected neighbourhoods, reduce antisocial behaviour linked to canister littering, and ensure that West Yorkshire’s roads remain safe for all?”</p> <p><u>Cabinet Member Response</u></p> <p>Nitrous oxide is classified as a Class C drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, except for medical use. Possession and supply are criminal offenses, with enforcement led by the Police. Police action is intelligence-led, typically requiring public reports and a warrant for entry and search of premises. Joint visits with Trading Standards are also conducted. Police have the authority to search individuals and vehicles if drug possession is suspected. Nitrous oxide remains easily accessible online.</p> <p>Despite relatively low numbers of reported cases, supporting communities on nitrous oxide issues remains a priority. The Base in Kirklees provides education to young people on the risks and harms of nitrous oxide, including safe handling and disposal of canisters. Guidance is also available for parents, schools, and stakeholders. For adults, our substance misuse provider, CGL reports no cases where nitrous oxide is the primary substance of concern among those seeking support, nor is it commonly seen in court or custody cases.</p> <p>Council teams regularly remove nitrous oxide canisters found in public spaces as part of street cleaning and fly-tipping operations. Residents can dispose of found canisters at household waste recycling sites, free of charge, to ensure safe and responsible disposal.</p>
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2	<p>Question from Councillor J D Lawson to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook</p> <p>“In April 2025 I was approached by a CIC who wanted to set up a Community Hub on the Walpole Estate and were looking at the possibility of using the now closed former Family Centre as a base. The CIC came with funding and saw, like myself, the need for activities for young people and eventually other community based activity run out of the former Family Centre. Ideas that are achievable and could rebuild a sense of community on Walpole. Walpole at present has nothing bar a corner shop and an infrequent bus service leading to residents feeling it has been neglected and forgotten about by Kirklees. After contact with a number of different service directors and officers over many months Cllr Alex Vickers, the CIC lead and myself finally got to see inside the building to see if it would be suitable for use in August. After this visit we were informed that discussions were taking place about the long term future of the Centre.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please update me on the further discussions taking place and outcomes?”</p> <p><u>Cabinet Member Response</u></p> <p>The centre at Walpole Street is held as an asset of the Housing Revenue Account. As with all underused assets vested with Housing, Homes and Neighbourhoods officers have undertaken option appraisal work to consider residential conversion and possible other options should that not be viable, including alternative community use. The outcome of this work is now being validated, with recommendations progressing through the approval process. Preferred options will be considered for approval by officers within Homes and Neighbourhoods with a recommendation to be made to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Housing. Officers anticipate this decision being proposed before the end of March 2026.</p>
3	<p>Question from Councillor Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Education – Councillor Rylah</p> <p>“Recently, the Department for Education announced their new initiative: Go All In, featuring 2026 as the national year of reading and restoring reading for pleasure across the nation.</p> <p>I’ve been asked by the Student Head Librarian at one of the schools in my ward, what the Council are doing in 2026 for the Year of Reading, but also what else the Council thinks school libraries should be doing for the Year of Reading to increase reading for pleasure?”</p> <p><u>Cabinet Member Response</u></p> <p>Kirklees Council is aligning with the Department for Education’s Go All In initiative for the National Year of Reading 2026 by delivering a programme of library-led activities designed to restore reading for pleasure across the</p>

	<p>borough. This includes themed events such as Story walks, author visits, and our unique Library Adventures children’s reading for pleasure programme, alongside national highlights like National Storytelling Week, World Book Day, and World Book Night. Libraries will adopt the campaign’s “If you’re into it, read into it” approach, connecting books to personal interests such as music, sport, and gaming, and will work with schools and early year settings through outreach, shared reading campaigns, and digital resources.</p> <p>The Council is working in close collaboration with the Great Heights English Hub and the Research School to embed evidence-based practice across schools and educational settings in Kirklees. This partnership ensures that literacy development is informed by robust research and establishes strong foundations for the 2026 Year of Reading.</p> <p>Through regular network meetings, senior leaders, curriculum and assessment leads, and subject specialists engage with the latest developments in literacy, discuss innovative approaches to teaching, and strengthen professional dialogue. These forums encourage collaboration across schools, creating a culture in which best practice is shared and adapted to meet local needs. By coordinating these efforts, the Council is helping to build a sustainable framework for literacy improvement, ensuring that the Year of Reading becomes a catalyst for long-term educational success and a lasting culture of reading across Kirklees.</p> <p>In terms of what School Libraires can do, The Council recommends that school libraries register on the campaign website to receive updates and resources. What's On For Schools National Year Of Reading 2026 National Literacy Trust The National Literacy Trust will provide a flexible, year-long programme with professional learning and engaging content to help schools embed reading for pleasure into core practice and leadership priorities. Schools could foster a reading culture by offering choice-based reading, hosting events such as book swaps and festivals, and linking reading to pupils’ interests. They could also promote inclusivity through diverse collections and sensory-friendly spaces.</p> <p>These efforts aim to make reading visible, social, and joyful, reversing the decline in engagement and improving wellbeing. As schools cannot achieve this alone, they can follow guidance on working with public libraries during the Autumn 2026 community focus and connecting directly with the Kirklees Library service to encourage children to join and explore what Kirklees Libraries offer.</p>
4	<p>Question from Councillor Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner</p> <p>“There are examples of submitted planning applications where third parties such as Yorkshire Water have clearly stated that they do not have the resources to support the increased infrastructure demands such an application would create. What is the process for the planning department to liaise with such third parties when considering the application for approval?”</p>

	<p><u>Cabinet Member Response</u></p> <p>Yorkshire Water are consulted on all major planning application and will comment on clean water supply, waste water removal (including surface water), and treatment capacity. Yorkshire Water are a commercial company acting as statutory undertakers and as such are ‘asset managers’, e.g. the responsible for the upkeep and investment in the public sewer network. The company is legally obliged to ‘effectually drain the area’ under the Water Industry Act 1991 and invest in 5 year cycles known as AMP (asset management plan) periods, overseen by the industry regulator OFWAT.</p> <p>The planning authority must consult the Lead Local Flood Authority as statutory consultees for surface water flood risk. This legal function is carried out by our Flood Management & Drainage department that are ‘flood risk managers’, and look at the best way to drain surface water from the site. They are also the Land Drainage Authority and as such will have the final say on whether the national preference of drainage surface water via infiltration methods (SUDs) is suitable. This preference forms the surface water hierarchy of disposal, and they would then consider watercourses for a suitably restricted direct or indirect connection. Only when the LLFA deems both these options to be unsuitable can a connection to a combined public sewer be considered, taking Yorkshire Water comments into account.</p> <p>It is noted that a standard response from Yorkshire Water to all major planning applications across the wider Yorkshire Region has changed recently, including the statement that there is no capacity in the public sewer system for foul water (in addition to surface water). However, there is a well established process where the statutory undertaker is legally obliged to declare sewers that have capacity issues and form a planned programme of investment in order to effectually drain their area. It is noted that there are limited declarations across the Kirklees district and certainly not related to pipework in the vicinity of all applications.</p> <p>Where upgrades are planned as part of Yorkshire Water’s AMP period, the council would consider delaying a development until the upgrade has occurred, however in practise this rarely is required as a drainage solution is usually found between the developer and YW which the Council is then content with. The developer may choose to enter into an agreement with Yorkshire Water outside the planning process to contribute to works required in order to help facilitate commencement of construction on site.</p>
5	<p>Question from Councillor J D Lawson to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook</p> <p>“When will the land vested with housing on Springdale Avenue be cleared of the fly tip?”</p> <p><u>Cabinet Member Response</u></p> <p>Thank you for bringing this issue to our attention at Cabinet last week.</p>

	<p>Following your report, which I immediately escalated, the Homes and Neighbourhoods Caretaking Team have acted swiftly and already undertaken a clearance of the fly tipped items. They will complete a further clean-up of litter over the next days and then monitor the site for any future issues. They will undertake any further removal or enforcement action as necessary.</p>
6	<p>Question from Councillor Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner</p> <p>"Following the Chancellor's budget announcements concerns have been raised across the business community and especially in the hospitality sector about the viability of many businesses hit with significant increase in business rates, coupled with the rise in employer NICs and above inflation increases to the minimum wage.</p> <p>Given this and the worsening economic outlook, what action is being taken to review the viability of the Cultural Heart and George Hotel business cases to make sure that these will not become a drain on Council finances"</p> <p><u>Cabinet Member Response</u></p> <p>Thank you for your question. We fully recognise the current economic challenges facing businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector, and share the importance of ensuring that major regeneration projects remain financially sustainable and do not become a burden on public finances.</p> <p>Our Cultural Heart is designed to deliver long-term social and economic benefits and act as a catalyst for wider investment in Huddersfield town centre. Each phase of the programme is subject to a rigorous Cabinet approval process, which considers the economic outlook. This ensures robust oversight before any commitments are made.</p> <p>Phases 1–3 are underway, with visible progress on site. The Food Hall within the former Queensgate Market will create a vibrant destination, and its operating costs will be met by the occupier. Public assets such as the square, Library, Museum & Art Gallery, and town park will provide cultural and social value while attracting further investment. Later phases, including the Queen Street plot and new venue, will only proceed following separate business cases and Cabinet approval, with the intention that operating costs are covered by occupiers.</p> <p>Regarding the George Hotel, Radisson at a recent visit to site reaffirmed their commitment to taking on and operating The George Hotel under their Raddison Red brand. The contract arrangements for the construction and operation of The George are being finalised, which considers and ensures that the project is financially sound and aligned with our regeneration objectives, including the on-going investment that is happening around Huddersfield town centre.</p> <p>We continue to monitor economic conditions and explore opportunities for wider public and private sector investment to maintain viability. Both projects demonstrate the Council's commitment to using strategic public investment to</p>

	provide for our communities, unlock private sector growth, strengthen the local economy, and deliver lasting benefits for Huddersfield and the wider district.
7	<p>Question from Councillor R Smith to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Regeneration – Councillor Turner</p> <p>“We’re starting to see abandoned housing developments due to the developer going bankrupt. What fiscal checks do the planning department carry out on developers who submit planning applications to minimise the risk of this happening?”</p> <p><u>Cabinet Member Response</u></p> <p>The planning system does not cover matters of developers going bankrupt in the future. The role of the planning system is to facilitate high quality developments to meet our housing and job targets. Individual private businesses are responsible for financing their own developments.</p> <p>During the planning application stage discussions are held between Council Planners and applicants to agree planning conditions and S106 Agreements. Planning Conditions are worded to enable development to happen whilst ensuring developers construct their schemes in a way to minimise disruption to residents and complete their permissions.</p> <p>The Council is committed to helping developers deliver their planning permissions and is available to discuss concerns developers may have during the construction phases.</p>
8	<p>Question from Councillor Sheard to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison</p> <p>“The Council has announced further job cuts, yet I have identified significant savings — of at least a million pounds — that could be made by merging or removing senior management posts where responsibilities clearly overlap.</p> <p>Frontline services have already absorbed years of reductions, including the grass-cutting team, which has been stripped from over 250 staff in 2016 to roughly around 40 today.</p> <p>Given this, will Cabinet explain why a review of senior management posts has not been prioritised <i>before</i> proposing yet more cuts to frontline staff who have already borne the brunt of previous savings?”</p> <p><u>Leader Response</u></p> <p>While some frontline services have faced reductions over time, senior management roles have been held vacant to assess whether portfolios could be allocated differently.</p> <p>The number of Executive Directors has decreased from 5 to 4 since 2023.</p>

	<p>Service Director portfolios are regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate leadership to services. All Service Director and Executive Director recruitment and structural changes are subject to Personnel Committee agreement. Over the past five years, the Council’s workforce has experienced notable fluctuations. Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) figures increased to 5,556 in 2020 to over 7,000 in 2023, (H&N insourced in 2022) then reducing to 6,758 in 2024 and 6,377 by September 2025.</p> <p>As the organisation has reduced, we have had a concentrated effort on redeployment of staff and to date we have successfully redeployed 208 staff across all levels in the organisation.</p> <p>In the recent draft budget proposals, the majority of roles impacted by savings proposals are either vacant positions mainly in back office functions and management posts.</p>
9	<p>Question from Councillor Masood Ahmed to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison</p> <p>“Can the Leader confirm whether she has made any request to the Chief Executive or Mayor under the Flag Flying Policy to support the raising of the Palestinian flag, and if not, will she explain why the full extent of her authority under that policy has not been used?”</p> <p><u>Leader Response</u></p> <p>The flag policy states that any ad hoc flag flying requests are usually received by the Civic Office or Town Hall Management, and they are then re-directed to the Chief Executive’s Office. Ad hoc requests will be decided upon jointly by the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and the Mayor. As a Former Mayor I am sure you are well aware of this protocol. The Leader does not have the authority to order any flag to be flown.</p>
10	<p>Question from Councillor Scott to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison</p> <p>“The Culture and Change portfolio emphasises the importance of strong leadership, openness, and respectful engagement across the organisation. In light of this, can the Portfolio Holder explain how current approaches to member engagement align with these principles, particularly given ongoing concerns about delayed responses to councillor enquiries and the perception that issues are only addressed when raised publicly?”</p> <p><u>Leader Response</u></p> <p>My portfolio is Cultural Services and the Transformation programme and it does not include the areas that you refer to in this question. However, there is independent verification of the Leadership of the Council, since I replaced yourself as Leader of the Labour Group, by way of the LGA Peer Review Inspection in November 2024 and review in September 2025. I quote their 2025 report:</p>

	<p><i>‘Working relationships between the Leader and Cabinet, and the Chief Executive and Senior Management have matured further – collectively have brought stability, clarity, grip and more energy to the council.’</i></p> <p><i>There is ‘greater confidence, tempered with realism, from the collective senior political and management team about how they will address current and future challenges.’</i></p> <p>I believe they were able to come to this conclusion as a result of strong leadership, openness and respect having been demonstrated. I can address any complaint and remedy it. If there are specific examples you can cite, I would be happy to look into them.</p> <p>Member engagement, via the many opportunities for all councillors to share their views and to ask questions of the administration, is predicated on these principles. This is in addition to our scrutiny functions; through which more pre-decision scrutiny has been undertaken.</p>
11	<p>Question from Councillor Scott to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Pattison</p> <p>“As Leader responsible for Culture and Change, can you explain why key information including delays, officer decisions, and Forward Plan movements continues to be withheld from councillors until the last minute, or not provided at all?”</p> <p><u>Leader Response</u></p> <p>This appears to be a question about governance and not my portfolio of Cultural Service and Transformation Programme. To answer it as such.</p> <p>All key decisions are published in the Council’s Forward Plan in accordance with the statutory requirement to provide at least 28 days’ notice before the decision is taken. This process ensures transparency and gives councillors and the public the opportunity to be aware of forthcoming decisions. The forward plan is a live document which is regularly updated. It is appropriate for things to move within the plan or indeed come off the plan as new urgent items are added. Significant officer decisions are published on our website in line with legislative requirements and our scheme of delegation. These decisions are usually published with an accompanying report to be as transparent as possible, and the scheme of delegation is also available online.</p> <p>Portfolio holders are regularly informed of any delays to programmes or projects; and where this is connected to a deadline approved by Cabinet, a report would be brought back to Cabinet with an update.</p> <p>As a former Leader I would have thought that you would be aware of these constitutional and legislative requirements.</p>

12	<p>Question from Councillor H Zaman to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook</p> <p>“Under the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Council has statutory duties towards people leaving custody or with previous convictions. However, your previous response to Council did not set out the specific operational guidance used by officers.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member clarify which assessment criteria, internal decision-making guidance, and risk-management frameworks Kirklees Council currently uses to determine eligibility, priority need, and prevention duties for individuals leaving prison?”</p> <p><u>Cabinet Member response</u></p> <p>The response provided to this question at the last Council meeting explained that the Council undertakes homeless assessments and makes decisions on homeless duties in line with the Statutory Homeless Code of Guidance. There is therefore no specific operational guidance used by officers in relation to homeless assessments and decision-making for individuals leaving prison. As required by law, the Council undertakes a holistic case by case assessment with full reference to that statutory guidance. These assessments determine what if any housing duties are owed and generates a personal housing plan which outlines steps that the individual and the Council will take in order to resolve any housing issues.</p> <p>Also as mentioned in my previous reply, for people leaving prison who have nowhere to live when they are released, Housing Solutions does have a pathway for receiving statutory ‘duty to refer’ notifications from prison and probation partners, ensuring that wherever possible homeless assessments are done in advance of individuals leaving prison, in order to identify what duties are owed and to assist with identification of realistic housing options to minimise the risk of release from prison into street homelessness. Partners including the probation service and Kirklees Better Outcomes Partnership (KBOP) are key to helping meet the housing needs of this cohort.</p>
13	<p>Question from Councillor H Zaman to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport – Councillor Crook</p> <p>“Can the Cabinet Member explain how this administration justifies placing disabled residents in temporary accommodation that is clearly unsuitable for wheelchair users, despite the Council’s legal duties under the Housing Act, Equality Act and Care Act and whether this reflects a wider breakdown in how vulnerable people are being treated under the current homelessness system?”</p> <p><u>Cabinet Member response</u></p> <p>There is an assertion in this question which is inaccurate, this administration does not have a policy to place disabled people into accommodation that is unsuitable for their needs and so does not justify something they do not do.</p>

The treatment of vulnerable people is at the heart of everything we do and prioritisation of vulnerable groups through council policy and service provision has always been central for this administration. This prioritisation is explicitly identified in our Council Plan and Priorities but also through other strategy documents – including implicitly, through Priority 3 in our Kirklees Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy which was adopted in September last year. This prioritisation is appropriate given that disabled people are disproportionately represented among homeless populations nationally and in Kirklees.

When placing any households into temporary accommodation, the Council follows statutory guidance on what type of accommodation is considered suitable. Consideration of whether accommodation is suitable will require an assessment of all aspects of the accommodation in light of the relevant needs, requirements and circumstances of the homeless person and their household. Where a household has particular medical or physical needs, access to and around the home are taken into account.

Where temporary accommodation is provided under interim temporary accommodation duties, such as those households waiting for a main homelessness duty decision under the Housing Act or being accommodated pending the outcome of a review or appeal, accommodation may be used which would not be suitable to be used for a longer period. Where accommodation which is less suitable is being used, efforts will be made to secure alternative accommodation and assessments will be carried out by the Council's Accessible Homes Team to consider what adaptations can be made to the accommodation to improve suitability and they may also award additional priority on the Council's housing register to shorten any time a household has to spend in accommodation which does not fully meet all of their longer term needs.

There is very high demand for temporary accommodation and a shortage of supply, which is particularly acute for wheelchair-accessible temporary accommodation. When the Council has a duty to provide TA for a disabled resident, we will first look to see if wheelchair adapted council or leased self-contained accommodation units are available. If not, then other alternatives will be sourced which may in a last resort be wheelchair accessible and adapted hotel rooms. If there are any other unmet care and support needs, referrals will be made to appropriate agencies including Adult Social Care.

Given that the Council acts in accordance with statutory guidance when providing temporary accommodation for those who are disabled or wheelchair users, I do not believe there is a breakdown in the way vulnerable people are treated by the homelessness system in Kirklees.