

City of York Council

Resolutions and proceedings of the Meeting of the City of York Council held in the Guildhall, York on Thursday, 27 March 2025, starting at 6.30 pm

Present: The Lord Mayor (Cllr Margaret Wells) in the Chair, and the following Councillors:

Acomb Ward

Lomas
Rose

Bishopthorpe Ward

Nicholls

Clifton Ward

D Myers
Wells

Copmanthorpe Ward

Steward

Dringhouses & Woodthorpe Ward

Fenton
Mason
Widdowson

Fishergate Ward

Whitcroft
Wilson

Fulford and Heslington Ward

Ravilious

Guildhall Ward

Clarke
Melly
Merrett

Haxby & Wigginton Ward

Cuthbertson
Hollyer
Watson

Heworth Ward

B Burton
Douglas
Webb

Heworth Without Ward

Ayre

Holgate Ward

Kent
Steels-Walshaw

Hull Road Ward

Baxter
Moroney
Pavlovic

Huntington and New Earswick Ward

Cullwick
Orrell
Runciman

Micklegate Ward

J Burton
Crawshaw
Kilbane

Osbaldwick and Derwent Ward

Rowley
Warters

Rawcliffe and Clifton Without Ward

Smalley
Wann
Waudby

Rural West York Ward

Hook
Knight

Strensall Ward

Fisher
Healey

Westfield Ward

Coles
Nelson
Waller

Wheldrake Ward

Vassie

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Taylor.

71. Apologies for Absence (6:35 pm)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Taylor.

72. Declarations of Interest (6:36 pm)

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

In relation to Agenda Item 17 (Motions on Notice), specifically the motion titled 'Working to tackle the growing epidemic of violence against women and girls (VAWG)', Cllr Coles noted that as the Deputy Mayor for Police, Fire and Crime for the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority her role included holding the police to account for the York and North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Strategy. She had requested and received special dispensation from the Monitoring Officer to participate in the debate and vote on the motion.

73. Minutes (6:37 pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the Budget Council meeting and Extraordinary Council meeting held on 27 February 2025 be approved and then signed by the Chair as a correct record.

74. Civic Announcements (6:37 pm)

The Lord Mayor noted that this would be her last ordinary meeting of Council in the Chair and thanked all members for their support during her term of office.

She then updated Members on the recent activities of the civic party, having attended a range of events which showed York at its best and demonstrated the city's diversity in celebrating cultures from all over the world. These included the Chinese New Year celebrations, a showcase of Sri Lankan dance and customs, Bollywood dancing, sharing the breaking of fast at the Mosque, sharing stories with residents and members of the Armed Forces

on Commonwealth Day, and coming together to remember victims and survivors of the Holocaust, as well as visits to schools, older people's residential homes, and sharing music with people with special educational needs.

The Lord Mayor concluding by drawing attention to the York Community Woodland, noting that she had visited several times over the course of the year and would continue to do so privately. She noted that the Woodland was a peaceful gem in the busy lives of many York residents which represented the city's promise and commitment to achieve net zero, and she urged all members to visit.

75. Public Participation (6:40 pm)

It was reported that seven members of the public had registered to speak at the meeting under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

The first six public participants all spoke in relation to the motion on 'Changes to disability and long-term sickness benefits' at Agenda item 17 (Motions on Notice).

Flick Williams stated that the proposed changes presented an existential threat to disabled people, and accused the government of seeking to balance the books on the back of the poorest. She noted that many disabled people had been subject to abuse and urged Members pick a side on the issue.

Anne Norton noted that the announced changes had caused many disabled people profound distress. She suggested work and worth had been falsely equated and highlighted the underfunding of research into chronic conditions, arguing that the cuts were inhumane and that any savings would be short-lived.

Ben Ffrench argued that the motion did not go far enough, noting that the proposed changes would harm council services and the local economy. He suggested that there were alternatives including a wealth tax, and urged Members to join the MP for York Central in using their influence to oppose the cuts.

Lali Hewitson noted that Government figures suggested that cuts to Personal Independent Payments (PIP) would push 250,000 people into poverty. Highlighting the impact on those who were

unable to work, they noted that the financial burden would be shifted onto disabled people and their families and friends.

Hilary Conroy suggested that the root of the issue was a societal belief that disabled people should put up or shut up, noting that ableism represented an everyday violence in which all were complicit. They urged the Council to consider how to show its support for disabled people in practical, tangible ways in future.

Luca Wollny observed that accessing PIP was already a high bar, including for many neurodivergent people, highlighting an existing epidemic of mental health issues. He noted that recipients of PIP lacked the means, not the desire, to get into work, and that cutting their support to do so would prove counterproductive.

Gwen Swinburn spoke in relation to governance matters within the remit of the Council, noting that no community governance review had taken place since 1996. She suggested that parish councils being able to access funding which was denied to unparished inner wards was a democratic disgrace and called for change.

76. Petitions (7:03 pm)

It was reported that notice of no petitions had been received under Rule B6.

77. Report of the Leader and Executive (7:03 pm)

A written report was received from Cllr Douglas, Leader of the Council, on the work of the Executive.

Cllr Douglas was joined by the other Group Leaders in offering their appreciation to the Rt Hon Lord Mayor of York Cllr Wells, as she approached the completion of her term of office.

78. Questions to the Leader or Executive Members (7:14 pm)

Members were invited to question the Leader or Executive Members. Questions were received from the floor from the following Members, and replied to as indicated:

Questions to Cllr Douglas, Leader of the Council

From Cllr Widdowson: The Labour government has announced plans for a 15% head-count cut in civil service jobs. Can you explain whether you believe this will support plans to locate a government hub on the York Central site which will help to create the high-skill, high-wage jobs that we all want to see in York? York Central is predicated on civil service jobs going there; what is your plan for ensuring we get those high-skill, high-wage jobs from the government onto York Central?

Response: I will tell you what I can and then perhaps Cllr Kilbane can answer some of it as the jobs aspect is his role too. We're in constant conversation with the Government Property Agency with that tenancy on York Central, it is very much still a high priority. The developers, Homes England, Network Rail, the partnership are still working on that, so we're expecting to get an update as the comprehensive spending review decisions are made, but at this point in time we're still feeling very optimistic, and it will be great to see such an instrumental and impressive building over there. York Central is not predicated totally on government jobs, there's a great deal of opportunity there around other forms of work; we're looking at the innovation hub, which is really exciting, to bring scientific lab space in there and growth hub space for new and growing businesses, which is really important for our city, because there's an absolute dearth of that availability. As you might imagine, the interest in the buildings on York Central is really high; we've just had the closing of the procurement for the hotel space there and the interest to take that up was really quite impressive, so to be quite honest we are very optimistic about what opportunities York Central can continue to bring into the city, and I'm not sure that we fully understand exactly what that will look like yet given that it is a long-term project. So, a huge opportunity, we're open for business and are encouraging inward investment. Cllr Kilbane would you like to add anything?

Cllr Kilbane: Only if Cllr Widdowson wants me to because the question was to the Leader?

Cllr Widdowson: Thank you for the offer, but no.

Questions to Cllr Kent, Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change

From Cllr Widdowson: I was puzzled by the mention in your report of the number of missed waste collections having gone down, as the EPAT Scrutiny scoresheet presented this week suggested the opposite is true, with the direction of travel being red for both the number of missed collections and the number

meeting criteria for recollection per 100,000 collections. Is the Executive Member correct, or is the scrutiny scorecard correct?

Response: Based on the information I had when the report was written, there were fewer reports of missed waste collections. I think there's some digging behind the scenes to be done because whilst the same crews are collecting from all properties the green waste is also included in that so there is probably a higher propensity to report if you pay for something, and those figures are not separated out, but the crews are not reporting any increase in missed waste. The number of reports may be going up but I will delve into those figures and give you a written response.

Supplementary from Cllr Widdowson: Your report also mentions that fly-tipping is down, but official statistics from the Council show that the incidence of fly-tipping went from 2,368 cases in 2022-23, to 2,500 in 2023-24, and after eleven months this year is already at 2,675. Are you getting incorrect statistics given to you?

Response: Again, I'm going to delve into those figures and get back to you with a written response, but the figures I was given when I wrote the report suggested that the figures were down.

Questions to Cllr Kilbane, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economy and Culture

From Cllr Crawshaw: I'd be interested to know what conversations you've had around supporting the cultural sector in the city, thinking not only about the larger cultural organisations but in particular some of the smaller spaces in the city? This is with particular regard to the challenges that those small spaces face, often from somewhat predatory developers who perhaps seek to take them over, close them down and turn them into something that doesn't speak to the cultural vibrancy of the city.

Response: I could talk on this subject for 35 minutes but will try to keep it a little briefer. Tonight while we sit here, people are assembling in Tempest Anderson Hall for Reignite VIII, a project the Council has been supporting through government UKSPF money. It brings together all the cultural and creative sectors and other businesses in the city, so that all businesses realise what an incredible creative sector we've got. The kinds of jobs people do in these sectors don't require academic qualifications, but can earn around £50,000 a year on average, so we are looking for this sector to offer pathways for our residents, especially those without academic qualifications, into decent jobs, where they can afford to live in York and raise a family here, or whatever it is they want to do. That process has been so successful we are now looking for space in the city that sector can grow into; it's also brought

together all of the cultural institutions, so we are considering setting up a cultural advisory board along the same lines as the Tourism Advisory Board, because that's been so successful, to bring all those organisations together and help it grow in the city. However, challenges do remain for the smaller venues; we are still in spite of all of our best efforts without a 500-capacity venue that the city so desperately needs, and we continue to explore opportunities for that. We are also still having to work to save our smaller venues – as you may be aware, in our ward we are currently campaigning to try and save the Victoria Vaults as a music venue. It has been a very successful venue over the last few years, a lot of up-and-coming bands and student bands played there. Unfortunately, it has been bought and I think the intention is for development rather than reopening, so we will continue to campaign for those venues because they are the lifeblood of culture in the city. I could go on!

Questions to Cllr Lomas, Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality, and Inclusion

From Cllr Fenton: Without wanting to pre-empt discussion coming later, in light of the announcements in relation to the government's plans for long-term sickness benefits and other welfare reforms, can you set out what steps you've given initial thinking to in terms of how the Council can respond to the challenges these changes will present?

Response: I share your concern about the broader impact of changes to a system that was already creaking under the weight of demand on it. As you know, as a Council we cannot make direct changes to statutory benefits set at government level, but we can make sure the services we are able to provide directly can support people where other systems might have gaps. We've proven our ability to do this in response to the removal of winter fuel allowance from people who were not claiming pension credit; we started a campaign to directly target people who might be eligible for pension credit but were not claiming it, and we have gained over £10 million lifetime support for those people who we directly targeted and supported to claim pension credit which also allowed them to access winter fuel allowance. At the same time we were targeting people who might just miss out on the threshold for pension credit, using our household support funding and our York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS), and you'll all know from sitting here discussing the budget last month that in the coming

financial year we have put additional money into YFAS so that we can help those residents in York who need us most.

From Cllr Nelson: I would like to ask about the improvements that I have been very pleased to see on Acomb Front Street. I'm sure every councillor in the room has been to Acomb to look at our new mural, and it's fantastic that such significant investment is being put into such an important area of our city in what I would call the 'benches not bollards' approach. I would like to ask how the UKSPF has played a part in the improvements and the reasons for it being targeted in the way it has been?

Response: We must thank the Lord Mayor for joining us to unveil the mural on Front Street last Saturday, she spoke very eloquently about the importance of place, and the importance of places like Acomb. As Cllr Nelson knows very well, I am very proud of Acomb, proud to be from Acomb, proud to live in Acomb, and proud to represent Acomb. During my almost six years as a councillor, I have done my best to share that pride with all of you; in almost every speech I made to Council as a backbencher I mentioned Acomb. The UKSPF funding was given for promoting pride in place, and that's why I have just mentioned the word 'proud' about seventeen times, because I'm really happy to see so many people sharing that pride now in our space. We have thinned out the bollard forest that so many people found to be unwelcoming, harsh, not conducive to a shopping space where people wanted to linger. The improvements that we've made, thinning out that forest and replacing it with planters, green stuff, and benches, with some genuinely community-designed public realm, has really made it a welcoming place that people want to linger. They want to spend time there, they want to spend money there, they want to meet friends, use services and have fun. The banking hub is now open in its temporary home in the library, ousting local councillors for their surgery to a different room temporarily. I'm delighted to announce that the market provider has just announced a second market per month, Flourish and Feast, on the second Saturday of the month; I know Cllr Nelson knows about that as I spied a quote from her in the press release about it. I've always believed that Acomb had the potential to be the place to be for out-of-town shopping, and it's great that we're now seeing a bustling shopping high street. I'd like to thank all who contributed to the public engagement over the last year, as well as those who worked on it, including council officers and especially Art of Protest for the work they did, not only to engage the community in designing and delivering the removal, but also to work hard with young people from across Acomb, Westfield and surrounding areas to get

involved in art and to truly believe that art is something for them, because we know how important that is in our young people's futures.

Questions to Cllr Pavlovic, Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities

From Cllr Whitcroft: I'd like to ask about the new funding the government has just announced for affordable housing; £2 billion across the country – what does this mean for York, particularly for our affordable housing drive in replicating the successful work done, such as the Ordnance Lane development in my ward?

Response: York has benefitted from the Affordable Homes Programme in recent years; a number of projects including the James House hostel were delivered via the programme. This is very welcome news; there had been top-up money for the existing programme since Labour took power in July, but this new announcement of £2 billion to deliver up to 18,000 additional social homes is to be welcomed. I'm very much hopeful that York will be able to benefit, as you say we have a number of affordable housing projects, not just those being delivered by ourselves, but also those being delivered by registered providers and other housing associations also entitled to benefit from applying for this funding. In addition to the funding the Mayoral Combined Authority will have for brownfield affordable housing, we're in a strong position to benefit, but we haven't been allocated the funding, neither has the MCA, but we will be applying to Homes England for that funding as the projects go along.

Supplementary from Cllr Coles: I was in Chapelfields this morning talking to residents about the work taking place to improve the existing council housing stock, could you update us on the work taking place around improvements to our existing housing, particularly around damp which was an issue raised by a number of residents with me this morning. We had York Community Energy there this morning and they are also working with residents to try and reduce energy bills, but it was the improvements to housing which was the big issue people wanted to talk to us about.

Response: In addition to the housing delivery programme, £12 million is invested this year in capital works, including replacement bathrooms, kitchens, windows and doors, not just in Westfield and Dringhouses. Damp and mould is a really significant issue and since we took power in 2023, we have reduced the number of properties across the city that have damp and mould. Work is ongoing, there will be completion of work in Bell Farm, for example, specifically around damp and mould, and we will

continue to focus on that, and as Awaab's Law has identified, we will respond to notifications of damp and mould quickly and promptly. I'm pleased to hear from your residents that they have noticed the difference.

Questions to Cllr Ravilious, Executive Member for Transport

From Cllr Healey: Please can you explain why no apparent progress has been made in responding to the recommendations of the scrutiny task and finish group on Dial and Ride which was completed nine months ago?

Response: As you'll know we put some money aside in our budget to start looking at the model we need to develop for a dial and ride service; officers are currently working on appointing consultants to develop that model. We are absolutely committed and realise it is a vital service, but we're not going to rush into just doing what happened before; there were problems with the last model and we know we have to develop a different model. We're also working with the Mayoral Combined Authority to look at working across boundaries to serve North Yorkshire and York at the same time. We're committed to doing it, it's underway, there will be a report coming forward, but we're not ready to do that yet. We're not going to rush into it, we're going to get it right.

Supplementary from Cllr Healey: At Tuesday's EPAT Scrutiny Committee we were told that the Park and Ride tender was not yet completed or on track due to lack of officer capacity, are you confident that there are enough members of staff in this area to complete the task you've just outlined in a reasonable amount of time?

Response: I am confident because officers briefed me this week on dial and ride that they are progressing to appoint a consultant to develop that model for us. So yes, I'm confident, yes, we have got a lack of capacity in some parts of Transport and Highways, but we are managing that; we will move forward with the priorities, and dial and ride is a priority.

From Cllr Mason: I believe that the dualling of the outer ring road is a vital part of our efforts to reduce city centre through-traffic, creating safer, more pleasant areas for cycling, wheeling and walking, and improving public transport reliability. Can you please confirm whether you remain committed to delivering in full the dualling scheme for which planning permission was granted and secured with cross-party support?

Response: Firstly, we are delighted that we now have a Local Plan, but we absolutely recognise that part of that Local Plan is to

deliver the upgrades that are necessary for development around the city. We are absolutely committed to doing that, of course we are. At the moment we have consultants assessing the options for how work on the outer ring road can be phased so we can deliver it with the budget that we have. There will be a report coming forward soon to look at how we deliver the outer ring road, but in short, my answer is yes, we are committed to delivering those improvements to support our sustainable travel strategy and to enhance the city for everybody and allow our fantastic city to progress and achieve its full potential.

Supplementary from Cllr Mason: Can you confirm personally that you are committed to the full dualling scheme?

Response: What I said was that I am committed, obviously we can't commit when we don't know what the budget is for doing what was approved in the planning permission. What we have to look at is the budget that we have and how we can phase the works to deliver what is necessary to enable those developments first of all, and then bring about the improvements that we all want to see. So yes, I have a commitment, but I can't possibly commit to something when we don't know what the budget available is and how much that's costing. The consultants are currently looking at the costing and how it can be phased.

Supplementary from Cllr Steward: When is your best guess for when spades will first be in the ground?

Response: Again, I can't answer until I've had that report from the consultants – I haven't seen it yet.

The Lord Mayor sought clarification whether it was the Executive Member's intention to let Members know when she had received the report.

Response: Yes, as soon as I've had that report from the consultants, it will be brought to Executive and made public and we will all be able to scrutinise it and see what the recommendations are.

From Cllr Rose: The report references the public consultation on Park and Ride and we've heard about the re-tendering, I wanted to understand what you think we are able to achieve with that, particularly around accessibility?

Response: The Park and Ride is a really great opportunity because when we re-tender we can think about how we can improve what's already a fantastic service. I'm delighted to report that this morning I visited the production line at Castleford to look at how the buses are produced and what kind of options we could have to arrange interiors to be as accessible as possible. Our Access Officer came with me and we had a really interesting and

productive visit. Our commitment now is to be engaging with the disabled community, to bring them on board to help us understand what kind of layout and features will make buses as accessible as possible, and I think there's a real opportunity for us in that Park and Ride tender to bring forward a public transport system that is so much more accessible for everybody. There's something exciting there, and in addition we're going to be looking at other improvements we can bring about with the tender; we could be looking at cross-city services, better links to villages, evening services and greater integrated transport options with things like overnight parking. There are a lot of good things that will come, and some of that will come in combination with the development of the Park and Ride hubs, which is coming out to consultation soon. I think there's a really bright future for our buses and a lot of positive things coming forward, which I'm looking forward to sharing with you all soon.

Supplementary from Cllr Rose: Would you be able to confirm/promise that the public consultations will directly engage the disabled communities of York and ensure we're referring to and talking about those aspects?

Response: I absolutely will confirm that, it's really important to us to get this right and to make sure it is as accessible as possible in all of our public transport.

Questions to Cllr Steels-Walshaw, Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care

From Cllr Ayre: What conversations have you had with colleagues from the Integrated Care Board about the impact of the proposed 50% budget cuts that they are facing in the third quarter?

Response: Those budget cuts are at the very beginning stages, and I have begun to speak to them, but at the moment there is nothing set in stone about what's going to happen or what that's going to look like, or indeed what changes are proposed.

Supplementary from Cllr Ayre: The ICB is entirely back-office, they will lose 50% of all of their staff, basically – what planning are you doing and what implications do you think that will have on our Adult Social Care services, losing that resource from the NHS at such a crucial point?

Response: It's very early days; we are in conversation with the ICB and with Adult Social Care as to the effect it would have as there is potential for the whole restructure to work in a very different way, but at the moment we do not know what that looks like.

Questions to Cllr Webb, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

From Cllr B Burton: The Public Health report that is coming to Council tonight highlights a number of challenges facing children, can you set out what we're doing to respond to these in the city please?

Response: We'll talk more about that report later; it is great to see a real focus on children but a real shame to see the challenges that children are facing in the country at the moment, and particularly in York. What are we doing, well we're doing quite a bit actually. Firstly, the York Healthy Schools Award, a project working between York and North Yorkshire Public Health teams. It has three different levels, bronze, silver and gold, and they are very much focused not just on physical health but mental health within schools and indeed to get the higher awards you have to show support for staff wellbeing too, which has a huge impact on children's wellbeing. So that is one avenue we are looking at, and I really want to thank the staff in schools who have taken the time to do what they can to gain that status, because it is an effort, and it does take time, but is certainly something that is welcome. As well as that, on the York Place Board, York Health and Care Partnership I have consistently advocated for children, and they have put me on the Board now to continue to advocate for children because I think that has been a focus that has probably been missed and I'm really glad that is something we can now move forward on. It's worth saying that we also have a SEND Employment Forum; supported internships for children and young people with education, health and care plans, working in collaboration with Aviva, York College and the national charity Project Search. Those internships have started and are running this year which is fantastic for young people to access those projects, giving them a sense of achievement, a sense of what it's like to be in work environments, which is a real positive for them and their families. The health and wellbeing surveys will continue in schools this year so we can continue to identify particular trends in York and then tackle those accordingly; as well as that recently schools have been working through the ADHD-friendly status and a number of schools have been successful in achieving that status, to support children around neurodiversity; we have a long way to go in the school system but I will always applaud any staff taking the time and commitment to supporting those young people, because school is a challenge and I'm sure as we all know has got more challenging, so I really welcome the focus on that. I could carry on but will stop there.

Supplementary from Cllr Ayre: Talking of challenges facing children, given the government's own calculation says that the spring statement will put 50,000 children into poverty, what calculations have you done of the impact on York? How many children do you think will be affected directly in York and put into poverty, and what steps are we taking quickly to be able to support them in future?

Response: A good question which is really nice to see from you. It is quite early stages on what the effects will be on children in York, we have to be clear that the number of children in poverty in this city has risen considerably over time, and if you look for example at figures around pupil premium percentages within schools, they have consistently risen over time. There is an awful lot of work going on already to combat the poverty that's been created over the last few years, but that's not to say that these cuts will not have an effect, and we should acknowledge that and prepare for what we can do moving forwards. For my part, I was in conversation with officers today about how we poverty-proof our classrooms, how we poverty-proof schools. There was also a headteachers termly briefing focused on how we poverty-proof schools, and the Council's role in that is convening those schools from different trusts and from the maintained sector, bringing everyone together to make sure that whatever we do in one school in York we're doing across all schools in York. There are things we can look at, uniform costs for example, obviously free school meals to look at what we can do to support there. We were an early adopter of supporting auto-enrolment within schools for pupil premium and free school meals, because that has a huge benefit for young people and their families. As well as that we can talk about the transition between primary and secondary school and the costs associated with that, going into specialist lessons for example, digital access – I've been working with IT ReUse and am trying to get to a point where we could do a mobile phone drive to get old mobile phones, clean up the technology, and redistribute those to young people who need them. So there are a variety of things that we are working on, a variety of things that we want to push forward, because as you well know, I am absolutely dedicated to doing what we can for young people in poverty in the city.

79. Recommendations of the Executive: Review of the City of York Council Scrutiny Function (7:54 pm)

Cllr Douglas moved, and Cllr Fenton seconded, the following recommendations of the Executive made at its meeting held on 11 March 2025, as set out from page 51 in the agenda papers.

Recommended:

- i. That Council endorse the proposed actions as set out in Annex B in respect of Scrutiny Review Report recommendations 1-2, 4-7 and 9-12, noting that a cross-party working group will be established to lead on and oversee the work;
- ii. To recommend that, in respect of recommendation 8 of the Scrutiny Review Report, Full Council resolves to implement a revised Scrutiny structure, comprising an overarching Scrutiny Committee (including calling in functions) with nine seats, a Place Committee with nine seats, and a People Committee (to include Housing) with nine seats. These changes to take effect at the 2025 Annual General Meeting and will be reviewed in 12 months;
- iii. To recommend to Council that Recommendation 3 of the Scrutiny Review Report is not adopted.

Reason: To seek Full Council's approval for changes to how Scrutiny operates at the Council.

On being put to the vote, the recommendations were declared CARRIED and it was

Resolved: That the above recommendations be approved.

Action Required

1. Note approval of the recommendations and take any action required. BR/LT

80. Scrutiny - Report of the Chair of the Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (7:56 pm)

A written report was received from Cllr Fenton, Chair of the Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee, on the work of the committee.

**81. Recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee:
Polling District and Polling Place Review (7:57 pm)**

Cllr Douglas moved, and Cllr Hollyer seconded, the following recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee made at its meeting held on 17 March 2025, as set out from page 87 in the agenda papers.

Recommended:

- i. That Council agree the final recommendations to the polling places and districts as set out in Annex 1 of this report until the next statutory review, or until it is superseded by any subsequent review of any polling place or district;
- ii. That Council agree to publish the revised electoral register on 1 May 2025. (Where the ERO has decided to revise their register by republishing it to incorporate the changes, the law requires that they publish a notice 14 calendar days before the publication of the revised version of the register in a local newspaper, at their office and at some other conspicuous place or places in the area);
- iii. That Council agree to delegate to the Chief Operating Officer, in their capacity as the Council's Returning Officer, the power to make urgent changes to the polling scheme during a statutory election period, where time does not permit a report to be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee. Where such urgent changes are proposed, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee will be consulted, along with the relevant ward councillors. This will ensure that polling arrangements in the City remain fit for purpose for each election called.

Reason: To comply with statutory requirements and to give better flexibility with making decisions regarding polling places between statutory reviews.

On being put to the vote, the recommendations were declared CARRIED, and it was

Resolved: That the above recommendations be approved.

Action Required

1. Note approval of the recommendations and take any action required. LT/EC

82. Recommendations of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee: Licensing Act 2003 - Cumulative Impact Assessment and Statement of Licensing Policy (7:59 pm)

Council received a report which presented the recommendations of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee at its meeting held on 5 March 2025, as contained in the reports set out in the Council agenda from page 141. Cllr Melly moved, and Cllr Cuthbertson seconded the following recommendations contained in the report:

Recommended: That it be recommended to Council that the draft Policy and/or CIA is amended with alternative wording agreed by members.

Reason: To meet the legislative requirements of the Licensing Act 2005.

On being put to the vote, the recommendation was declared CARRIED, and it was

Action Required

1. Note approval of the recommendations and take any action required. LC

83. Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024/25 (8:00 pm)

Cllr Steels-Walshaw moved, and Cllr Webb seconded, the following recommendation contained in the report of the Director of Public Health at page 244 of the agenda papers.

Recommended: Council are recommended to publish this Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024/25.

Reason: To fulfil their duty under the Health and Care Act 2012, and to progress work on improving the health of young people in the city.

Following a brief debate, on being put to the vote, the recommendation was declared CARRIED and it was

Resolved: That the above recommendation be approved.

Action Required

1. Note approval of the recommendation and PR
take any action required.

84. Proposed Change to the Health and Wellbeing Board Terms of Reference (8:13 pm)

The following recommendations contained in the report of the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer at page 349 of the agenda papers was moved by Cllr Steels-Walshaw and seconded by Cllr Douglas.

Recommended: Council is recommended to approve the revised Terms of Reference for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Reason: In order to update the terms of reference in line with the Health and Wellbeing Board's requirements.

On being put to the vote, the recommendation was declared CARRIED and it was

Resolved: That the above recommendation be approved.

Action Required

1. Note approval of the recommendation and BR
take any action required.

85. Use of General Exception (Urgency) and Special Urgency Procedures (8:13 pm)

Council received a report of the Monitoring Officer on the use of General Exception and Special Urgency Procedures, as set out from page 369 of the agenda papers.

Resolved: To note the report.

Reason: To comply with legislative and constitutional requirements, and ensure full transparency.

86. Appointments and Changes to Membership (8:14 pm)

Resolved: That the appointments and changes to membership set out in the agenda at pages 373-374 be noted.

Action Required

1. To note approval of the appointments list, JP/JM
make the changes on the system and
inform organisations as required.

[The meeting adjourned between 8:18pm and 8:37pm].

87. Motions on Notice (8:37 pm)

i. Introduction of a Visitor Levy

Moved by Cllr Whitcroft and seconded by Cllr Clarke.

“Council notes:

- that York attracts over 8 million visitors annually, significantly contributing to the local economy but placing additional strain on infrastructure, public services, and the local environment;
- that many cities, such as Venice and Amsterdam, successfully employ tourist levies to offset these impacts, without deterring visitors to the local economy;
- a visitor levy could provide additional revenue for maintaining public spaces, public transport, heritage conservation, waste management, sustainability projects, supporting the city’s long-term goals and for promoting York;
- that recent budget consultations demonstrated strong public support for the introduction of a visitor levy in York, with around 90% of York residents who responded to the consultation in favour.

Council believes:

- it is great to live in a place that millions of people from all over the world want to come and spend time in;
- welcome though visitors are, a visitor levy would allow York to ensure visitors contribute fairly to the city's upkeep and to its sustainability, and to better manage the pressures that mass tourism brings;
- funds should be ring-fenced for projects and initiatives that enhance the visitor and resident experience, improve public services, provide better facilities and reduce the environmental impact of tourism;
- evidence from numerous cities shows a modest visitor levy would not deter tourists and is now an accepted contribution across Europe to the costs of maintaining and enhancing popular visitor destinations;
- the council should work to develop the case for a tourism visitor levy with its partners, including the hospitality, arts and culture sectors, as well as with business and residents' groups.

Council resolves to ask Executive to continue to progress:

- exploring the feasibility and practical mechanisms for introducing a visitor levy for overnight stays, including for short-term holidays lets, in consultation with local businesses, residents, and hospitality industry stakeholders;
- researching visitor levy models from other cities to determine the best approach for York, including an Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID) option;
- lobbying central government to grant local authorities the necessary legal powers to implement a compulsory visitor levy;

in order to ensure York's tourism remains sustainable, benefiting residents and visitors alike."

Cllr Warters then moved, and Cllr Rowley seconded, an amendment to the above motion, as follows:

"After 'Council notes' and after the fourth bullet point add a fifth bullet point with the following wording;

- In addition there is of course the long standing public support in York for an end to the Council Tax Educational Exemption that sees York, as a University City, disproportionately affected with a loss in Council Tax revenue now approaching £7 million a year.

After 'Council believes' and after the second bullet point insert a further bullet point to read;

- Reforming the Council Tax system to ensure students living in York also contribute fairly to the City's upkeep, its sustainability and to better manage the pressures that being a University City brings.

After 'Council resolves to ask Executive to continue to progress' and after the third bullet point add a fourth bullet point to say the following;

- Lobbying Central Government for a urgent review of Council Tax legislation with a request for removal of the Council Tax Educational Exemption in the interests of residents, visitors and students and the equitable treatment of all in being levied taxation to support the places they live or visit.

In the final sentence of the motion delete of the words 'York's tourism' and to add after the word 'ensure' the following; 'the maintenance of York is better funded and'."

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared LOST.

Cllr Widdowson then moved, and Cllr Mason seconded, an amendment to the above motion, as follows:

"Under 'Council resolves...', after the third bullet point add two additional bullet points:

- 'the introduction of a tourism levy – in voluntary or mandatory form - by May 2027 at the latest;
- the start of consulting the existing BID and Hospitality Association of York over the introduction of the tourism levy;"

In relation to a point of order raised by Cllr Crawshaw pursuant to Rule B19 (1) (e), the Monitoring Officer confirmed that there was presently no legislation in place allowing for the introduction of a mandatory tourism levy, and that any voluntary levy would need to be done via the York BID rather than by the Council; the amendment remained valid as it asked the Executive to undertake an action rather than committing Council to take an action, and therefore the Executive were at liberty to disregard it.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared LOST.

Following debate, a vote was taken on the substantive motion, which was declared CARRIED and it was

Resolved: That the above motion be approved.

ii. Changes to disability and long-term sickness benefits

With Council's agreement Cllr J Burton's amendment was incorporated into Cllr Fenton's motion. Cllr Fenton then moved, and Cllr J Burton seconded, the following motion.

"Council notes that:

- The Government is bringing forward a Green Paper on changes to disability and long-term sickness benefits, including Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
- PIP is a benefit not linked to work that is designed to help people with the additional unavoidable costs of being disabled;
- Reports have suggested that the Government is considering freezing PIP payments in 2026 and tightening eligibility criteria, including for reassessments
- Many disabled people use PIP to cover the cost of getting to and from work, for paying for essential equipment and for meeting social care charges
- The Resolution Foundation has commented that "Freezing PIP next year will result in a real-terms income loss for around four million people, 70 per cent of whom are in low-to-middle income households"
- The York-based Joseph Rowntree Foundation has said that "If the Government cuts disability and long-term sickness benefits it will be unethical, short-sighted and can only deepen hardship."
- The fear that many disabled people feel around the impact of any cut to PIP
- The need for careful language when discussing issues around welfare or disability so as not to unnecessarily demonise those in need or give any validation to those who wrongfully or maliciously characterise welfare recipients as scroungers or undeserving;
- York Central MP Rachael Maskell has said that "it is right that the Chancellor has oversight over all those budgets but not at the expense of pushing disabled people into poverty."
- York Outer MP Luke Charters has signed a letter which states "As MPs, we understand that delivering this new social contract

requires hard choices to be made. We welcome the work that has begun to rebuild our welfare system, and we are fully supportive of it.”

- If reports of a £5bn cut to PIP turn out to be true, this would be greater than the cut that led former Conservative Work & Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith to resign from Government in 2016

Council believes that:

- Reviewing welfare support to ensure all members of society are able to engage with society and live fulfilling lives is welcome;
- Any review of welfare support should not be predicated on a pre-determined cost saving;
- Support for disabled people has been severely impacted by years of austerity. Disabled people need better support, not a cut in income.

If the Government does decide to make significant cuts to PIP and other disability and long-term sickness benefits, there is likely to be a direct impact on City of York Council and its partners in a number of ways, such as:

- An increase in demand for council financial assistance through schemes such as the York Financial Assistance Schemes
- An increase in demand for the council's means-tested Disabled Facilities Grant
- Increased demand for advice and support from the council's Local Area Co-ordinators and partners such as Citizens Advice York
- An increase in the number of disabled residents who may be unable to afford care charges, impacting on their ability to continue to live independently
- Those disabled people currently in receipt of the higher rate mobility component of PIP, who have a Motability vehicle and whose awards are downgraded would lose entitlement to a Motability vehicle, which would impact significantly on social isolation and create further dependence and could stop them being able to get to and from work. (PIP is not an out of work benefit).

Council resolves:

- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister to express;
 - this Council's strong belief that welfare reform must not be predicated on financial savings and in particular, cuts to PIP;
 - that as a Council we recognise the difficult financial situation the country faces and believe the correct way to address this is by tackling the enormous wealth inequalities that exist in our society, not by removing desperately needed support from those least able to bear the cost;
 - the severe impact of austerity on support services and the soaring levels of need;
 - that following the social model of disability necessitates that National and Local Government work tirelessly to remove barriers – whether physical or financial – to ensure disabled people are able to live socially, emotionally and financially secure and fulfilling lives which puts them on an equal footing with non-disabled people;
- To request the relevant Scrutiny Committee to undertake a review via a Task and Finish Group, when detailed Government proposals on disability and long-term sickness benefits are known in order to identify likely impacts on the demand for support from the council and its local partners.”

During the debate, Cllr Crawshaw moved and Cllr Ayre seconded a motion without notice to extend the length of the meeting by up to 30 minutes to allow for a full debate on motions ii. and iii. On being put to the vote this was declared CARRIED unanimously.

Following a point of order being raised by Cllr Webb pursuant to Rule B19 (1) (b) in relation to the language used by Cllr Warters, Cllr Webb moved and Cllr Lomas seconded a motion without notice pursuant to Rule B25 that Cllr Warters no longer be heard and that the next speaker be moved to. This motion was declared CARRIED, and the next speaker was moved to.

Following further debate, on being put to the vote the substantive motion was declared CARRIED and it was

Resolved: That the above motion be approved.

iii. Working to tackle the growing epidemic of violence against women and girls (VAWG)

Moved by Cllr Baxter and seconded by Cllr Steels-Walshaw.

“Council notes:

- its approved 2021 VAWG motion and the worsening situation four years on;
- the Government’s commitment to halve VAWG in the next decade but recognises that this bold ambition requires action from everyone;
- that VAWG is significantly underreported. North Yorkshire Police recorded 2000 domestic abuse incidents for York last year but estimates indicate more than 4000;
- that commissioned support services in York and North Yorkshire supported 14,000 victims and survivors of domestic abuse in 2023/24;
- that children witnessing domestic abuse causes them significant harm;
- the physical and emotional cost of VAWG on survivors and their families, friends and communities is devastating and includes depression, PTSD, brain injuries, long-term pain, self-harm, miscarriage and other pregnancy complications;
- National Police Chiefs Council reported that between April 2022 to March 2023 more women died by suicide following domestic abuse than by being killed by a partner;
- research has drawn a link between misogynistic online content and unhealthy and negative attitudes to relationships;
- the York Schools Survey highlights around 15% of children disagree that hitting or kicking and sharing undressed or sexual photos of a person with someone else is always wrong in a relationship. Under half thought that telling a partner what to wear, checking where they are all the time and being jealous is always wrong;
- approval of York and North Yorkshire’s Domestic Abuse Strategy in 2024, the council’s recent Domestic Abuse Resident and Tenant Policy and the council’s commitment to work towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation.

Council believes:

- VAWG is an epidemic and responding to it is everyone's responsibility;
- sexism and misogyny, as some of the drivers of domestic abuse, must be addressed early through prevention work with children and young people;
- action is needed from councillors, the justice system, education and NHS partners and Combined Authorities to turn the tide on VAWG in our communities;
- that survivors in York should have the right to access specialist, trauma-informed support;
- specialist services are best placed to support survivors and likely to result in less need for additional service support in the future.

Council resolves:

- that City of York Council's (CYC) Domestic Abuse Awareness Day, which took place last December during 16 days of action to tackle VAWG, be repeated each year, with learning shared with CYC Human Resources and partner organisations encouraged to run similar events;
- to ask the Council Leader to write to other council leaders in our region to encourage them adopt a similar approach around awareness raising across services and about VAWG being everyone's responsibility;
- to work closely with survivors and local specialist and 'by and for' services to understand the impact of VAWG in York;
- building on existing good work at Vale of York Academy, to work through both the council and local Multi Academy Trust chains to ensure comprehensive education on healthy relationships and respect for women and girls is available in all schools across York;
- that the Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities uses the new council reporting format to frequently update the public on steps being taken to reduce VAWG, and to hold the council and partners to account on these commitments."

During debate, following a point of order being raised by Cllr Lomas pursuant to Rule B19 (1) (b) in relation to the language used by Cllr Warters, Cllr Lomas moved and Cllr Webb seconded a motion without notice pursuant to Rule B25 that Cllr Warters no longer be heard and that the next speaker be moved to. This motion was declared CARRIED, and the next speaker was moved to.

[Cllr Warters left the meeting at 10:03 pm].

On being put to the vote the substantive motion was declared CARRIED unanimously, and it was

Resolved: That the above motion be approved.

Action Required

1. Note approval of the motion relating to Introduction of a Visitor Levy and take any action required. DM/NW/KL/PK
2. Note approval of the motion relating to Changes to disability and long-term sickness benefits and take any action required. NW/CD/SS/PS/LSW
3. Note approval of the motion relating to Working to tackle the growing epidemic of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and take any action required. HW/PR/NW/MS/LSW/CD/MP

Cllr Margaret Wells
LORD MAYOR OF YORK

[The meeting started at 6.31 pm and concluded at 10.05 pm]