

City of York Council

Resolutions and proceedings of the Meeting of the City of York Council held in the Guildhall, York on Wednesday, 17 July 2024, starting at 6.30 pm.

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

Acomb Ward	Bishopthorpe Ward
Lomas Rose	Nicholls
Clifton Ward	Copmanthorpe Ward
D Myers	Steward
Dringhouses & Woodthorpe Ward	Fishergate Ward
Fenton	Whitcroft Wilson
Fulford and Heslington Ward	Guildhall Ward
Ravilious	Clarke Melly Merrett
Haxby & Wigginton Ward	Heworth Ward
Cuthbertson Hollyer Pearson	B Burton Douglas Webb
Heworth Without Ward	Holgate Ward
Ayre	Kent Steels-Walshaw

Hull Road Ward

Baxter
Moroney

Huntington and New Earswick
Ward

Cullwick
Orrell
Runciman

Micklegate Ward

J Burton
Crawshaw
Kilbane

Osbalwick and Derwent Ward

Warters

Rawcliffe and Clifton Without Ward

Strensall Ward

Fisher
Healey

Rural West York Ward

Hook
Knight

Westfield Ward

Coles
Waller

Wheldrake Ward

Vassie

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mason, Pavlovic, Rowley, Smalley, Wann, Waudby and Widdowson. Councillors Nelson and Taylor were absent on parental leave.

Lord Mayor's Opening Remarks

Before the formal business of the meeting began, the Lord Mayor invited all present to stand for a minute's silent reflection in memory of the late Honorary Alderman Brian Watson.

She then welcomed Cllr John Moroney to his first Council meeting following his success at a recent by-election, and offered congratulations to Cllr Emily Nelson and Cllr Kallum Taylor, both of whom had welcomed baby daughters earlier in the month.

13. Declarations of Interest (6:38 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. None were declared.

14. Minutes (6:38 pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council meetings held on 21 March 2024 and 23 May 2024 be approved and then signed by the Chair as a correct record.

15. Civic Announcements (6:39 pm)

The Lord Mayor gave a summary of the activities of the civic party since she took office in May, including participating in York's Africa Day celebrations, York Pride, and the Our City festival. She noted that all could take pride in York as a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming city. She noted that it had been her privilege to meet with D Day veterans, as well as well as representatives from York's twin cities of Dijon and Munster.

She acknowledged the work of the Leader of the Council with York's Imam and Rabbi in developing a cross-community resolution on the situation in Gaza, which it was hoped would be concluded before the next full Council meeting.

The Lord Mayor also paid tribute to the late Honorary Alderman Brian Watson.

16. Public Participation (6:42 pm)

It was reported that five people had registered to speak at the meeting under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

Gwen Swinburn raised concerns over a proposed change to the Lord Mayoralty Points Allocation which would see the reallocation of unspent points from previous years, suggesting that this opened space for political interference. She called for any changes to the points system to be considered through proper democratic processes.

Flick Williams spoke in relation to Disability Pride Month. She noted recent progress around accessibility, but also raised concerns that disability equality training had not yet been rolled out across the authority. She called for an end to tokenism and the embedding of genuine disability equality into the Council's work plan.

Geoff Beacon spoke in relation to plans for York. He noted the relationship between wealth and carbon emissions and the impact of increasing housing costs on young people and renters. He suggested that the existing Local Plan was incompatible with decarbonisation, and called for all new housing in York to be car free.

The remaining registered speakers did not attend the meeting.

The Lord Mayor thanked all public participants for their contributions.

17. Petitions (6:53 pm)

Under Rule B5 2, the following petition was presented for reference to the Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee, in accordance with the Council's petition arrangements:

- i. A petition presented by Cllr Waller, on behalf of local residents, regarding an estate manager for the Chapelfields estate.

The following petition, which was not covered by Rule B5 2, was also presented for reference to Planning Committee B:

- ii. A petition presented by Cllr Whitcroft, on behalf of local residents, regarding the proposal to locate a new McDonalds restaurant off Fulford Road.

Action Required

1. Add the petition regarding an estate manager for the Chapelfields estate to the petitions log for referral to CSCCSMC. PS
2. Add the petition regarding the proposal to locate a new McDonalds restaurant off Fulford Road to the petitions log for referral to Planning Committee B. JG

18. Report of Executive Leader and Questions (6:56 pm)

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

Members were then invited to question the Leader on her report. Questions were received from the floor from the following Members in relation to the subjects listed and replied to as indicated:

Combined Authority and Regional

From Cllr J Burton: Can the Leader please provide a progress update on York Central since the last Council meeting in March, including possible changes to housing plans for the site?

Response: I was at York Central yesterday with the developers, the Chief Executive of Homes England, and the Combined Authority Mayor. Since November when the developers were selected and we've been having discussions with them, we've had very positive feedback from them responding to our vision and our hopes for the site, and the fact that it needs to deliver for the people of York. Up until that point many people doubted whether the development would go forward and give us the affordable, sustainable homes, good quality jobs, green space and biodiversity that we need. Many people didn't have confidence in that at all. The developers are already engaging with local communities. The conversations I've had with them, and those with Executive Members and other partners in the city have all been consistent in wanting to push up, above policy, truly affordable housing on the site and Homes England very supportive

of this. I'm really hopeful for the future of what the site looks like and think it will exceed our Labour Group expectations that we had when it got outline planning approval – I'm really optimistic.

Children, Young People and Education

From Cllr Healey: Your report mentions that the Council is currently developing a local youth strategy and you say that you recognise the value of good local youth provision, but you don't mention that your administration's changes to ward funding arrangements directly led to the loss of much-valued youth provision such as the Strensall Youth Club. Would you like to apologise to the young people who have been affected by your decision and explain how you will reinstate what has been needlessly lost?

Response: I cannot begin to think why it is that changes to the ward funding have affected a youth group, other than perhaps the decisions of councillors as to where they decide to award their money. Youth groups totally fit within the principles we are supporting, as many councillors in the chamber are supporting youth activities in their wards through their ward funding so it's not something that I really recognise; what I do recognise is that the Council is really starting to up its involvement in youth activity across the city; the Mayor of York and North Yorkshire is also very committed to this. Our pipeline of projects includes youth activities, youth hubs, cultural passports, so given the position that youth work in the city has been in for a number of years I'm optimistic about an increase in provision. I'm sorry but I really don't recognise what you're talking about.

Supplementary from Cllr Fisher: I'm surprised you don't recognise the problem we suffer in Strensall as far as youth provision is concerned. The Youth Club costs £12,000 a year to run, our ward funding has been reduced to £9,300, so that's why we've not been able to do it. Could you suggest how we can make that money stretch further please?

Supplementary response: Ward funding is one aspect of funding going into communities, unfortunately it cannot stretch to paying for everything for everybody, and there are decisions that all 47 of us as councillors have to make as to how we best use our ward funding. I know there are examples across the chamber where elements of a service, if not necessarily all of it, can be funded through ward funding, and many services across the city have had to look at bringing in funding from other places, for example grant

funds. We are working ceaselessly with our community organisations to help them do that. It would of course be fantastic to be able to fund everything 100% but unfortunately Council finances don't stretch to that; we all know it, we've all said it a hundred times about why that is – we're trying to balance the demands of every important service across the city; I hear the challenge, but we are all dealing with it.

Supplementary from Cllr Crawshaw: We know from Micklegate Ward that one of the issues with funding youth services from ward budgets is that it's year-on-year, so people can't recruit staff long-term, leading to gaps in provision. I believe the youth strategy that you're bringing forward is designed to give longer-term certainty around funding for some of those youth services, and to think about a more strategic approach across the city rather than just a piecemeal offer for young people – could you elaborate a little bit?

Supplementary response: Absolutely. It was not too long in the past when youth services some of the sustainability you describe and could be relied upon in areas of our city right across the board; we need to move back to something that is more akin to that but in a way that we can afford. That means we need to work in partnership across city, which is what the youth strategy is all about, that strength-based, asset-based approach to youth work. There is some fantastic work going on in the city which we should all recognise celebrate. We are doing what we can in tough times and the youth strategy and partnership work offer a real way to move forward.

Our City, Our Community/Council Budget 2025-26 Consultation

From Cllr Steward: A few months ago the Deputy Leader said we were £40m short a city, can the Leader say to nearest £5m how much money she believes the Council should get from the new government?

Response: The medium-term financial strategy outlines that over the next three years we need to make savings of £30m in order to stand still. We have to do that. It would be lovely if an envelope arrived on my desk with £30m. We may get some of that money, I've asked for it, I've also asked for the fair funding review, in which there has been cross-party interest, to be reignited. I can't commit to you at this point what the government will give to us. I'm sure that by autumn we will hear more, and I am keeping my fingers crossed. But we are in the queue with the health service, education, policing, roads and so on. We didn't get the money from

the previous government. I hope things will now be different, but I am not going to hold my breath on it for too long at this point in time.

Supplementary from Cllr Steward: I'm not asking the Leader to comment on behalf of the government, she's not hit such heights as that yet, but from a Council point of view, how much would she like to see the government give to us in the next financial settlement? The Deputy Leader said that figure was just over £40m. What residents want to know is what does she as Council Leader think we as a city need now, from whoever is in power. How much would she like to see the government give the City of York, to the nearest £10m, in the next financial settlement?

Supplementary response: It would be irresponsible of me to put figure on that and say to people that we're going to expect that income from the government. National finance is in such a poor state because his party left it like that and crashed the economy. We cannot give those numbers at this point in time, but I hope to be able to come back to you once the Autumn Statement comes out and tell you what we are being given. It is impossible to put a number on it now.

Supplementary from Cllr Rose: We are left to deal with all the problems in the country, but I think the real power in government that we have right now is not how much money we can receive from them. We've already talked about youth services; we know that the vast majority of our money is now spent on social care which wasn't the case some years ago. What are your other hopes beyond the financial settlement, what else do you think the new government can do for us? What else do you hope to see?

Supplementary response: Looking at the Labour manifesto there are a lot of commitments around issues and programmes that the Council has started already that we will benefit from, because we're in a great position with them, and that will help our budget as well. Breakfast clubs, free school breakfasts, childcare – we are ready to with that and have already spoken to the new Education Secretary about it. With other aspects such as youth work and the family hubs which have been so successful, we can really benefit. The fact that our Local Plan is coming through at the time it is, and the fact that we have got York Central online with the ability to deliver housing on that scale for the people of York, we can really benefit from fact that Labour wants to put so much into housebuilding. Our transport strategy is coming through, Executive

Members are interested in bus franchising and are keen to see the renationalisation of railways. I think there is great opportunity.

19. **Report of Deputy Leader and Questions (7:29 pm)**

A written report was received from the Deputy Leader, Cllr Kilbane.

Members were then invited to question the Deputy Leader on his report. Questions were received from the floor from the following Members in relation to the subjects listed, and replied to as indicated:

Deputy Leader's Report

From Cllr Fenton: Congratulations to the Deputy Leader on your election as Deputy Mayor for the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA). Your report claims the administration is steering York away from what you describe as the old insular politics of the previous administration. Can you please explain how this characterisation fits with the successes delivered by the previous administration in securing funding for major projects such as York Central, the station frontage and the outer ring road dualling which are now coming to fruition?

Response: I think given the track record of the previous administration, that funding was secured almost in spite of the previous administration. The generosity of Labour-led YNYCA is funding the York Central development referred to. To give an example, when we were in opposition before last year's election, Cllr Douglas and I met with the landowners of York Central, and in the first week post-election we met with Homes England and Network Rail and other York Central partners and were informed that we were the first political leaders that they had had a face-to-face conversation with. A project that affects the future of everybody in this city and region and there had been no political engagement with the people who were running that project, which had left officers of this Council having to second-guess what the then-Leader's opinion might be on particular developments. That's what happened when we went to see them; we sat down with them and said we want 40% truly affordable housing on that land, we want jobs on that land so that when people who live up on Severus Hill look down the hill they see opportunity in York Central for them and their kids. We told them we wanted it car-light because of climate concerns and in terms of the space needed there, and while they might not have agreed with everything we said they

were really glad to hear a political leader telling them what it was that this city wanted, because it had been so badly lacking through the insular politics of the previous administration.

Supplementary from Cllr Ayre: Isn't it the case that elsewhere in your report you claim to dislike a nasty brand of politics, yet your response demonstrates that this is in fact the way you like to do business?

Supplementary Response: What that refers to is the lies in Liberal Democrat leaflets in the Hull Road by-election, straightforward lies as well as the usual half-twisting of truths and ridiculous bar-charts. Putting lies through people's doors has an impact.

Cllr Ayre: The Deputy Leader is accusing people in this chamber of lying. That is not true, and is defamatory.

Cllr Kilbane: It is true, so it's not defamatory.

The Lord Mayor reminded both councillors to be respectful to one another.

Cllr Kilbane: Apologies if it was disrespectful, I was just trying to tell it how it is.

From Cllr Healey: This should be a much easier question to answer. When can we expect the process to be completed and a report brought to full Council so we can meet the Deputy Leader's long-term aspiration to remove this report?

Response: The previous questions were quite easy to answer. My understanding is that this will come to the Audit and Governance Committee at the end of July; obviously you are going to miss all this enjoyment once it's gone, but this report should be deleted from the end of July or soon thereafter.

20. **Motions on Notice (7:35 pm)**

(i) York Public Spending

Moved by Cllr B Burton, seconded by Cllr Coles.

"Council notes:

- Real terms funding reductions to City of York Council over a sustained period;
- The very difficult decisions the council has taken since 2011 to balance the budget - decisions involving all of York's main political parties;

- The particular challenges for York of having the lowest funding across all public services of any single tier council area in the country, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and the compound effect this has for each individual public service;
- Acute problems around access to affordable dentistry, A&E and mental health care, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision in schools;
- The prospect of increasingly difficult budget decisions impacting valued council services over the next three years if national funding remains as forecast in the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy;
- York's membership of the F20 Group of lowest funded local authorities in the country and the need for that Group to be active at this point in making its case to the new Government.

Council believes:

- While political groups often have different priorities, councillors share a commitment to the city's services receiving fair funding.
- Further, it believes specific pressure areas for local government require long term solutions and should be a priority for the new Government:

Council resolves:

- To request the Chief Finance Officer and Executive Leader jointly write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to request urgency in concluding the Fair Funding Review, first signalled by the Government in 2016, detailing why this is necessary;
- To request this opportunity is used to also highlight service pressures and to request long-term funding certainty to enable the council to plan its services over the period of each four-year electoral cycle;
- To request the Director of Public Health and Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care write to the Secretary of State for Health, pushing for early reform of the NHS dental contract to open up greater access to NHS dentistry in the city as soon as possible;

- To request Executive works collaboratively with other parts of the public sector locally, including York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, to consider how each can make efficiencies and save money by reviewing how services are delivered;
- To put on record its thanks to staff and partners for their work over several years in such challenging circumstances, and for their continued commitment to service delivery to the city.”

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

Resolved: That the above motion be approved.

(ii) Giving York’s children the best start in life

Moved by Cllr Knight, seconded by Cllr Waller.

“Council notes:

- The two-child limit, introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017, restricts support in Universal Credit and tax credits to two children in a family.
- Analysis by the Child Poverty Action Group shows that 900,000 children living in poverty in England do not currently qualify for free school meals because the Conservative Government introduced an arbitrary £7,400 household income threshold in 2018.
- A new report by the Commons Education Select Committee warns mental health problems and cost-of-living pressures on families are among the complex reasons for increased absenteeism.
- There are 2,737 children living in absolute poverty, representing 8.9% of all children in York.
- There are 3,372 children living in relative poverty, representing 11% of all children in York.

Council believes:

- Scrapping the two-child limit is the most cost-effective way to reduce child poverty. It would lift 250,000 children out of

poverty and mean 850,000 children are in less deep poverty across the UK and will lift at least 325 children in York out of absolute poverty.

Council resolves to:

- Ask the Council Leader to write to Members of Parliament representing York Central and York Outer, expressing the Council's support for the scrapping of the two-child benefit cap.
- Ask the Council Leader to write to the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to encourage them to scrap the two-child benefit cap."

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

Resolved: That the above motion be approved.

(iii) Ending disenfranchisement in elections

Moved by Cllr Baxter, seconded by Cllr Rose.

"Council notes:

- The significant increase in voters registering to vote by post since 1997, when fewer than 1 million were registered, to the 2024 Parliamentary Election where an estimated 10 million (approx. 1 in 5) were registered to vote by post;
- The importance of ensuring the postal voting system is robust as it accounts for a growing proportion of votes cast with every election;
- National law prevents Returning Officers from issuing emergency proxy votes to electors whose postal votes have not arrived on time, leaving the potential for them being unable to vote;
- Issues in the 2024 Parliamentary Election with the timely delivery of postal vote applications and ballot papers through the postal system, and the impact this has had on electors with many left unable to vote;
- The recommended solution for the late arrival of postal vote ballot papers being to take them to a polling station instead

of posting them fails to acknowledge mobility as one of the main challenges to voting in person and why people register for postal votes in the first place;

- Some electors also being left unable to vote following the requirement to present Voter ID, evidenced by Electoral Commission data returns from polling stations nationally in 2023;
- The requirement for Voter ID disproportionately affecting those from low-income households and other marginalised groups.

Council believes:

- The Government should listen to the legitimate concerns of professional members of the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) who state the legal timetable around postal votes means the current system gets overloaded and cannot cope.
- Disenfranchising voters in a democracy is inexcusable and must be urgently reviewed to ensure it doesn't happen again in future.

Council puts on record its thanks to council and other staff working so hard over local, regional and national elections to support the democratic process.

Council resolves to:

- Ask Group Leaders to write to the Secretary of State with responsibility for Local Government and to the Minister with responsibility for elections to support the calls of the AEA in requesting a review of current postal and emergency proxy vote rules, including revising the timetable for postal vote registrations, to ensure everyone who registers can vote;
- Request the Government conducts a review of the requirement to present ID to vote that considers:
 - a) the types of ID accepted; and
 - b) if it is shown to disenfranchise registered voters that the requirement to present ID to vote is scrapped altogether.”

Cllr Hollyer then moved, and Cllr Fenton seconded, an amendment to the above motion, as follows:

“In the first paragraph, under ‘Council notes’, add the following additional bullet points:

- ‘More in Common’s recent poll that revealed that the new Voter ID rules may have stopped 400,000 people from voting in the General Election;
- The national voter turnout fell by 7.4% nationally and an average of 10.35% in York’s two constituencies at the July 2024 General Election;
- The “York Opposes Voter ID Requirements” motion that was passed at the 15th December 2022 Full Council meeting that committed the Council to opposing the ID voting requirements.’

In the second paragraph, under ‘Council believes’, add the following additional bullet point:

- ‘That all the evidence of the last two years of local elections and the General Election shows that the “York Opposes Voter ID Requirements” was right that the new Voter ID laws has “undermined the democratic process and has created barriers to exercising the right to vote, disproportionately affecting ethnic minority, low income, homeless, LGBT+, elderly, disabled and young people.’

In the third paragraph, under ‘Council resolves to’:

- Delete: ‘Request the Government conducts a review of the requirement to present ID to vote that considers: a) the types of ID accepted; and b) if it is shown to disenfranchise registered voters that the requirement to present ID to vote is scrapped altogether’, and substitute:
 - ‘Request the Government scraps the Voter ID requirement for voting completely.’”

On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared CARRIED.

The motion, as amended, now read as follows:

“Council notes:

- The significant increase in voters registering to vote by post since 1997, when fewer than 1 million were registered, to the

2024 Parliamentary Election where an estimated 10 million (approx. 1 in 5) were registered to vote by post;

- The importance of ensuring the postal voting system is robust as it accounts for a growing proportion of votes cast with every election;
- National law prevents Returning Officers from issuing emergency proxy votes to electors whose postal votes have not arrived on time, leaving the potential for them being unable to vote;
- Issues in the 2024 Parliamentary Election with the timely delivery of postal vote applications and ballot papers through the postal system, and the impact this has had on electors with many left unable to vote;
- The recommended solution for the late arrival of postal vote ballot papers being to take them to a polling station instead of posting them fails to acknowledge mobility as one of the main challenges to voting in person and why people register for postal votes in the first place;
- Some electors also being left unable to vote following the requirement to present Voter ID, evidenced by Electoral Commission data returns from polling stations nationally in 2023;
- The requirement for Voter ID disproportionately affecting those from low-income households and other marginalised groups.
- More in Common's recent poll that revealed that the new Voter ID rules may have stopped 400,000 people from voting in the General Election;
- The national voter turnout fell by 7.4% nationally and an average of 10.35% in York's two constituencies at the July 2024 General Election;
- The "York Opposes Voter ID Requirements" motion that was passed at the 15th December 2022 Full Council meeting that committed the Council to opposing the ID voting requirements.

Council believes:

- The Government should listen to the legitimate concerns of professional members of the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) who state the legal timetable around postal votes means the current system gets overloaded and cannot cope.

- Disenfranchising voters in a democracy is inexcusable and must be urgently reviewed to ensure it doesn't happen again in future.
- That all the evidence of the last two years of local elections and the General Election shows that the "York Opposes Voter ID Requirements" was right that the new Voter ID laws has "undermined the democratic process and has created barriers to exercising the right to vote, disproportionately affecting ethnic minority, low income, homeless, LGBT+, elderly, disabled and young people.

Council puts on record its thanks to council and other staff working so hard over local, regional and national elections to support the democratic process.

Council resolves to:

- Ask Group Leaders to write to the Secretary of State with responsibility for Local Government and to the Minister with responsibility for elections to support the calls of the AEA in requesting a review of current postal and emergency proxy vote rules, including revising the timetable for postal vote registrations, to ensure everyone who registers can vote;
- Request the Government scraps the Voter ID requirement for voting completely."

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

Resolved: That the above motion, as amended, be approved.

(iv) Fair Funding for York

Moved by Cllr Ayre moved, seconded by Cllr Cuthbertson.

"Council notes:

- The Institute for Fiscal Studies released a report into the disparity of funding for the same public services in different Council areas
- The IFS finding that the national average of funding per person is £4310 compared to only £3642 for York, ranking

York last in England and significantly behind North Yorkshire (£4005 per person) and East Riding (£4059 per person) when all services were considered

- Of the 150 Council areas in England, York ranked 150th overall, 147th in NHS funding, 148th in schools funding, 143rd in Local Government funding, 49th in Police funding and 127th in public health funding. This represents a £668 per person shortfall in spending on the national average or a £135 million gap for the city as a whole
- The work the previous Liberal Democrat led administration did to highlight this issue and help form a cross-party group of councils from across the county to lobby for a fair funding solution for the least well-funded councils in England
- The casework issues ward councillors have experienced in York with residents who can't book a GP appointment, can't register with an NHS dentist, struggle to find school places or have been affected by crime and anti-social behaviour
- The specific challenges York faces relating to increasing numbers of older residents and the need to provide for additional Adult Social Care services

Council believes:

- Successive governments have failed to address the long-standing lack of funding across all public services in York
- The new government should invest an extra £300 million into the local authorities that struggle to provide essential and valued services to their local communities due to low core spending power
- The F20 group is right that there should be a funding floor of 90% of average core spending power of local authorities, if this was enacted York would gain £78 extra per capita
- Fair funding for York would mean the council would be better able to provide the services that are desperately needed to fix the crisis in funding of Adult Social Care we see in York

Council resolves to:

- Request the Council Leader and Leader of the Liberal Democrat group write to the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to urge the government to take action to resolve York's chronic underfunding by central government by closing the funding

gap between York and the national average within this parliament.

- Request the Council Leader to write to York's Labour MPs to request that they urgently lobby the government to introduce a fair funding solution to close the gap between the most and least funded Council areas in England
- Request the Council to engage with the F20 group of the lowest funded Council areas in England to build an England wide campaign for fair funding and enact their principles in the next funding settlement
- Call on the new government to commit to a funding floor of 90% in the next financial settlement."

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

Resolved: That the above motion be approved.

Action Required

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| 1. | To note approval of the motion on York public spending and take the appropriate action. | DM |
| 2. | To note approval of the motion on giving York's children the best start in life and take the appropriate action. | PS |
| 3. | To note approval of the motion on ending disenfranchisement in elections (as amended) and take the appropriate action. | BR |
| 4. | To note approval of the motion on fair funding for York and take the appropriate action. | DM |

21. **Questions to the Leader or Executive Members (9:18 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:

Question to Cllr Ravilious, Executive Member for Transport

From Cllr Nicholls: As the Executive Member will be aware, there has been a weight limit on Appleton Road Bridge in Bishopthorpe since October, and hopefully it will be fixed by the end of the year. Whether the bridge is open or closed the location of Celkom and a

number of haulage companies in the Acaster area means an ever increasing number of lorries going through Bishopthorpe, Copmanthorpe and Appleton Roebuck, and they are a real threat to road safety to the youngest and the oldest, to pedestrians and cyclists. Does the Executive Member agree with me that this is an entirely unacceptable situation and that such companies should be located at the side of motorways or main A-roads, and where land is cheap? If she does agree will she join myself and Cllr Steward in working towards stopping such companies operating where always driving through villages is unavoidable, and what action would she like to see the Council taking?

Response: I think this is a case of a company that's outgrown its location, it's become very successful, and obviously when we're looking at our transport strategy and the movement and place plan we're really focusing on what kind of places do we want to create, what sort of traffic and environment are we trying to create. With all of area you mention, having such huge HGVs going through the villages is not appropriate, and we need to look at ways to discourage that kind of traffic through small villages. Fixing the bridge is in progress and will help to relieve some of the pressure as we won't have all the HGVs going along the same road. We will need to start looking at measures we can introduce in the villages to make them feel safer places for people to walk and cycle safely, and to get to school and to the doctor safely. I would be very happy to come to visit you in your villages to look, with officers, at what measures we can introduce in the short term as part of our movement and place plan to make them a safe environment for people. We're committed to our vision zero policy to eliminate road deaths and serious injuries by 2040; making sure that heavy vehicles like HGVs are travelling slowly enough and ideally not going through small villages is something we will be looking to do. It's not something we can do overnight, we will have to work progressively on the kind of measures we can use in the coming years.

Question to Cllr Douglas, Executive Leader

From Cllr Hollyer: In terms of the motion just passed in relation to postal votes, in York there were issues with the timely dispatch of postal ballots and incorrect polling cards being issued which led to residents having to come into West Offices to collect their postal ballots and some residents being disenfranchised altogether. Could the Leader please tell us what discussions she has had with officers to date to understand these issues and how they arose,

and what resources will be put in place to avoid a repeat in the future?

Response: There is no way that we can understate the challenges that both officers and residents felt over the general election period concerning the receipt of postal votes and re-issuing for those whose postal vote hadn't arrived. That's why we actually put together the motion we've seen today so that we can look at that process. There is no getting away from the fact that the administrative burden on staff around registration of postal voters and reissuing was a problem, but the team responded really well. There were long waits at certain points, particularly the Friday before the election but the team responded to that and by the Monday wait times were much reduced. The conversations over that period were ongoing, and I think the team coped remarkably well given the situation; they were as distressed about the wait for residents as many of the residents were. This is a bigger system issue, it's not just about what we deliver locally; we need to work together to ensure the voting system works for people nationally, and hopefully we will benefit locally from that as well.

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

From Cllr B Burton: The Council's Public Health team commissioned the Healthy Schools programme from Healthy Schools North Yorkshire from March 2023 up until March 2025. Could the Executive Member outline the benefits to schools and young people in York from that programme?

Response: We've introduced this award alongside North Yorkshire. Huntington School first achieved a bronze and has now achieved a silver award, and I have been to speak to some of the young people there. Something that is really positive is that it is not just about physical health but mental health as well. Huntington School, for example, introduced mental health champions and a mental health policy; in order to get the silver and gold level awards schools have to show that staff wellbeing is part of this, something very dear to my heart. Finally I think the really key point around this are that it is supporting active lives, emotional health and wellbeing, healthy food in schools, and PSHE education. We are starting to encourage schools to do what they can to support their young people and their staff to be healthy in all aspects of their life. I'm really glad that a quarter of York's schools have

already started on this programme. I'd love to see more and we're hoping that will grow over time.

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

From Cllr Fenton: An issue that residents have raised with me is whether volunteers who help manage Council land, whether that's weeding kerbsides or gathering fallen leaves, will be charged by the Council for disposing of the green waste they collect on the Council's behalf? My understanding is that they will be charged in the same way as everybody else who wishes to sign up to that service, and I wonder whether the Executive Member shares my concern about the message that this could be perceived as sending out to volunteers in the city about how we appreciate their work if we don't seem willing to recognise that work through the system that's being implemented at the moment?

Response: You'll know from my report that I do value very highly the work that all our volunteers across the city do. how much value. This might be better for me to follow up with you afterwards about the particular volunteers and where they are doing the work, but the short answer is that if it's true voluntary work then there are arrangements with the Eco team for them to put the weeds or leaves they're picking up into green bags and have it collected by the Public Realm team. If they are currently putting it into green bins which are residential and will need to switch I can help you to put them in touch with the right people to do that. There could be some issue around where they are collecting green waste on Council land or their own land but if its genuine volunteer work there is a system in place and the Eco team are the ones to talk to; I can get in touch with you afterwards to discuss further.

Supplementary from Cllr Orrell: It's not just volunteers who work for organisations; there are many residents across the city who look after the areas in front of their houses as a part of civic pride to keep their neighbourhood looking in good condition. If they didn't do it, the Council would have to spend more money maintaining those areas. Are they are now going to be charged for the privilege of helping the Council by doing that?

Supplementary response: Obviously people are free to cut the verge in front of their homes, it's a matter of personal choice; you might prefer that the Council cut it more often than it does or is able to, and we've talked all evening about the difficult financial circumstances that local authorities find themselves in. We've

made a commitment to cut them six times a year this year, that's level of standard we can afford to keep at this stage; that's under review and we are checking on it. If people want to cut the verge more than that, that is a preference and a matter of choice; it is hard to balance because I also have an inbox full of people who are irate when the Council cuts the verge in front of their house because they were valuing the short flowering plants that were there. It's a choice. I value volunteer work and we all appreciate the civic pride that the residents of York show in the city and all the work that goes into that. Some people like very short grass, some people would like it much longer, and that's their choice; if they want to take that additional work on as many parish councils do that's great, and if it is truly volunteering work there is a system to help them remove green waste.

From Cllr Vassie: Your report refers to steps to improve biodiversity, for example changes in mowing regimes to support wildflowers. Councillors of all parties and none are reporting that wildflowers continue to be destroyed this year in wards across the city including on wildflower verges in Wheldrake, Westfield and elsewhere. Given that a Liberal Democrat motion aimed at enabling councillors of all parties to repeat our joint commitment for action on biodiversity was ruled out of order, how do you see elected members helping you to ensure that officers listen to the political will of York and deliver the protection and enhancement of biodiversity that we all wish to see? Your report also refers to the investment that Innovate UK is making in York; are you aware that Innovate UK helps local authorities extend EV charging to terraced properties. Will the administration seek to ensure that York's 15,000 homes in terraced streets can take advantage of Innovate UK funding and participate in the switch to electric vehicles?

Response: I am not sure as to what happened with the overruled motion, I think it was before my time on the Council. I think the gist of your question was how we can all ensure that biodiversity is protected and that officers enact that desire. I mentioned the mapping that has been going on over the last twelve months; I think everybody here knows that there wasn't a very good system, or no system of mapping properly what should be cut and what shouldn't. It is difficult and I'm not underestimating it – where we have this patchwork it is hard for operatives who are just sitting cutting to know about. If there are areas that have been cut and shouldn't have or vice versa, please get in touch with me and the Head of Environmental Services jointly so we can enable that

mapping to be done. It takes all of us – you know your local areas better than anybody. Keep informing us so that mapping becomes complete, and report immediately if it's gone wrong. I don't think there is a desire by officers to destroy biodiversity, they understand the importance of it. I think it's an operational management problem. You'll know that we deeply regret what happened in Wheldrake, and I hope the conclusion we've reached in terms of taking the management off the landowner in question will help, and I look forward to next year's crop there. There are further steps that we are taking in terms of biodiversity – I mentioned the local mapping that we are doing. If you ask me again about Innovate UK in the next item I can answer that then.

22. **Report of Executive Member (9:35 pm)**

A written report was received from Cllr Kent, Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency.

Members were then invited to question the Executive Member on her report. Questions were received from the floor from the following Members in relation to the subjects listed, and replied to as indicated:

Carbon Reduction

From Cllr Coles: Where is the partnership with Solar for Schools already operating and what are the plans to roll it out to other schools? Any particular reference to the Westfield Ward would be much appreciated.

Response: This is very timely. I was at Dringhouses Primary School this morning where 75 solar panels have just been put on the roof. I met the 'eco-warriors' from Reception to Year Six who were fantastically keen and passionate about the project. The whole team at the school was delighted and this is the latest of seven schools across York that now benefit from the Solar for Schools project. This is a fantastic collaboration between the Solar for Schools Partnership and local authorities and educational establishments; they assess your school to see if it's suitable, then do all the planning and installation, and there is a payback scheme whereby they take off the energy, but you get a reduced energy price, so it's a win-win. In addition, there is an educational component; they come and deliver STEM-type subjects around

sustainability, renewables and cheaper electricity, and involve the children in that. You'll be delighted to know that we have two more projects in the pipeline, the first of which is Westfield Primary and the next is Applefields School. I hope these will be installed by the end of this year which will bring the total to nine. It's a really wonderful project; a win for the planet because it reduces emissions, a win for the schools because it gives them extra educational training and cheap renewable energy, and a win for the Council because it reduces our costs.

Housing

From Cllr Whitcroft: What role is the Executive Member playing in the development of retrofitting Council homes and making sure our housing stock is as environmentally friendly as possible, particularly in relation to new development, but also existing housing stock?

Response: This overlaps with Cllr Pavlovic's portfolio; a huge amount of work has been done by that team to map all the energy performance certificates across the city, so we have a really good idea for each individual house of how its energy is used and how efficient it is. The good news for our Council tenants in our social housing is that generally we perform much higher than the private residential stock. In relation to that our retrofit policy is that under our repairs scheme we do voids first so that there is no fuss for tenants; much of the resistance to retrofit that has to happen is from residents themselves because houses are turned upside-down, insulation is quite intrusive if you're fitting heat pumps or new cookers, so we do it when there is nobody there. We've shortened the times between the voids and have done the repairs and mould prevention and made them cosier, warmer, cheaper houses to live in. This is a good time to ask this question – York has recently come first in one of the social housing major project awards, and second in the local authority doing outstanding work in this area under the social housing decarbonisation fund project in the Yorkshire Energy Awards; this was not just about delivering energy efficiency measures but doing it with customer satisfaction, craftsmanship and skill. In relation to the city as a whole we've been running various schemes which are largely government funded but from different pockets of funding; we've rolled this out really well and are seen as a very good place to pilot or roll out schemes in because of the way we do it. The lead project has

been for hard-to-reach areas: conservation areas, Gypsy and Traveller amenity areas. Teams have visited at least 35 private homes and there is at least another twelve months to run on this; they give an advice pack and support including details of trusted suppliers. The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) 2 is going to places which are hard-to-reach and not on gas. In terms of new build we have a commitment to 100% affordable housing which we are sticking to resolutely, and I'm delighted to announce that we are also sticking to Passivhaus standards where we can – this will be rolled out wherever possible, and these houses will be cheaper to buy, cheaper to live in and cheaper to run

Supplementary from Cllr Healey: You mentioned retrofitting heat pumps into existing Council properties – I wasn't aware we were doing so, so I'd be really interested if you could expand on that?

Supplementary response: Yes, in certain properties where we can, we have; we don't do it as a matter of course as there are some properties it doesn't suit and there's some debate over efficiency levels of insulation first, which was our priority. I can give you details of where that has happened after the meeting.

Garden Waste

From Cllr Fenton: Your report states that you are looking at relocating the Hazel Court recycling depot, can you please confirm which alternative locations are being considered, and also whether you are considering the future of the Towthorpe household waste disposal site?

Response: This is part of a Mayoral Combined Authority-funded project looking at the business case for a green energy park at Harewood Whin, which is where our recycling currently goes. This business case is in progress and the outline position would be the potential to provide 10,000 homes with renewable electricity from primarily solar or possibly onshore wind. This business case is also exploring the potential for hydrogen, for battery storage, and for EV charging. As a sideline to that, because Hazel Court is approaching capacity and there are issues with its location in the city centre, they are exploring the business case for relocating Hazel Court to Harewood Whin, which might make sense in terms of uptake from cheap renewables there. We're only looking at the business case for that as part of the project, it's not a conclusion and if it happened it would not be for some years; this is about assessing whether this would be part of the best use of a new

green energy park. If hydrogen comes out as the most appropriate use, then this might mean using it as a waste depot would not be the most efficient use.

Supplementary from Cllr Fenton: Is Towthorpe in the mix as part of the business case?

Supplementary response: It was Hazel Court primarily, so Towthorpe would remain. Obviously if there are benefits to doing anything there we would look at it, but that's not part of this project.

Supplementary from Cllr Ayre: As a point of clarification: one of the mitigations for the green waste changes is that residents can take their green waste to Hazel Court; you seem to have just said that Hazel Court will be closing and moving to Harewood Whin, so the suggestion is that green waste is taken to Harewood Whin?

Supplementary response: I apologise if I did not make myself clear, I said that what we have is a business plan being looked at as to whether it would make sense for Hazel Court to be relocated as part of the green energy park. I also said if this happened it wouldn't be for a number of years, probably the end of this decade if that did happen; meanwhile of course you are free to take your green waste to Hazel Court. If relocation did happen, if it made sense in terms of carbon and energy efficiency and costs to relocate, of course we'd also be looking at what happens to green waste for people who live in the city – meanwhile this is primarily about large vehicles travelling in and out of the city carrying waste which many people would say is not ideal, but nothing is going to happen in the next few years.

Supplementary from Cllr Crawshaw: You mentioned that the Harewood Whin project was part of discussions which are ongoing with the Combined Authority looking at the environmental benefits that there might be for the city, could you very briefly outline any other discussions that you might be having with the Combined Authority about potential environmental benefits for the city?

Supplementary response: Yes, this is funding we've already got, it was part of about £3m from the MCA Net Zero fund; in addition to that we've just had all of the LED lighting on the second and third floors of West Offices and 900 streetlights replaced through funding from the MCA. There's a possibility because of an underspend by North Yorkshire we might get an additional 1000 LED streetlights across the city and possibly for other Council buildings as well. We are joining with them on all sorts of projects, and there is also £10m in the mayoral climate fund which we are

putting pipeline projects forward for, so the new Combined Authority is a fantastic collaboration for us and opportunity for us to decarbonise the whole region, to get to Net Zero and all the benefits that entails for our air, our costs, our homes and our people.

23. Scrutiny - Report of the Chair of the Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee (9:45 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.

24. Parental Leave Policy for Elected Members (9:47 pm)

The following recommendations contained in the report of the Monitoring Officer at page 67 of the agenda papers was moved by Cllr Douglas and seconded by Cllr Kilbane.

“Council is recommended to:

- i. Agree to the implementation of the Parental Leave Policy for Members, attached at Annex A;
- ii. Agree that a Member taking Parental Leave pursuant to the Policy is a suitable reason for Council to grant a dispensation from the provisions of Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, and that such a dispensation is therefore granted for any Member taking Parental Leave pursuant to the Policy; and
- iii. Amend the Council’s Scheme of Delegation to introduce a delegation to the Monitoring Officer to confirm in writing a dispensation under b) above for any Member taking Parental Leave pursuant to the Policy.

Reasons:

- i. To ensure that Members requiring Parental Leave are able to take such leave as they may require, ensuring equity of treatment with Officers, and contributing towards improving Member retention and diversity;

- ii. To ensure that Members taking Parental Leave do not inadvertently vacate their offices by virtue of Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, by granting a dispensation in advance for any Member taking Parental Leave under the Policy, rather than requiring individual dispensation reports to be presented to Council meetings; and
- iii. To ensure that such dispensation can be confirmed at an early stage, and that individual Members are not required to disclose personal information unnecessarily.”

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

Resolved: That the above recommendations be approved.

Action Required

1. To note approval of the recommendations on the Parental Leave Policy for Members and take the appropriate action. BR

25. Joint Standards Committee Annual Report for 2023/2024 (9:56 pm)

A written report from the Monitoring Officer was received, presenting the Annual Report of the Joint Standards Committee for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year.

26. Use of General Exception (Urgency) and Special Urgency Procedures (9:58 pm)

The following recommendation contained in the report of the Monitoring Officer at page 82 of the agenda papers was moved by Cllr Douglas and seconded by Cllr Kilbane.

“That Council is recommended to note the report.

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

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

Resolved: That the above recommendation be approved.

Cllr Margaret Wells

LORD MAYOR OF YORK

[The meeting started at 6.31 pm and concluded at 9.59 pm]