

## Audit and Governance Committee

14 October 2024

### **Written representation received on 10 October 2024**

Public participation piece submitted by Cllr. Mark Warters

I submitted a few comments regarding the latest CYC Constitution re-write and cannot leave commenting on the never ending nature of this business that has little or no relevance to the people of York other than the restrictions under Public Participation.

Constitutional 'refresh' started under previous Monitoring Officers and carried on by the current incumbent and no doubt to be started again by the next post holder if Committee do not call a halt to this constant tinkering, most especially in times of austerity for the Council.

I will briefly highlight, taking the last Full Council as the best example, 4.3 (c) that CYC Full Council should ONLY have matters on the agenda that CYC are directly responsible for and not to be spending time debating world matters well outside of the remit of this Local Authority.

There may well be certain elements in the York population who have concerns on worldwide matters but these can be raised at various other forums such as debating societies and not at the expense of York matters that CYC should be dealing with.

Turning to the only real matter in this exercise that will have any direct effect on the council taxpayers of this City and that is public participation.

My comments are there to see and if criticism is to be stifled in this way by allowing the subjective opinion of those overseeing meetings to shut down participants it is a very slippery slope.

As someone who had the remote public participation shut down on me for having the temerity to mention a Public Interest Report at a Joint Standards Meeting I know only too well where this will lead if not addressed properly.

Some of you may think it doesn't affect you, but it very likely will at some point in the future and without the ability to hold senior council staffers to account or criticise if you prefer the term then Councillors serve no purpose whatsoever.

Some years ago I referred to council members being the 'glove puppets' of senior staffers and nothing that has happened in the intervening years has occurred for me to change that view.

The constitution should be enshrining further the doctrine of 'officers advising and members deciding' and curtailing any critical comment in public participation at meetings is thoroughly detrimental to that doctrine.

I don't know how much of this will pass the censors black pen though!

Mark