

## **Extraordinary Council Meeting**

Resolutions and proceedings of the Meeting of the City of York Council held in the Citadel, York on Thursday, 16 October 2025, starting at 6.30 pm.

**Present:** The Lord Mayor (Councillor Martin Rowley BEM) in the Chair, and the following Councillors:

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

Hull Road Ward

Baxter  
Moroney  
Pavlovic

Huntington and New Earswick  
Ward

Runciman

Micklegate Ward

Crawshaw  
Kilbane

Osballdwick and Derwent Ward

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

#### **40. Lord Mayor's Opening Remarks**

The Lord Mayor welcomed all in attendance to the October meeting of Extraordinary Council.

The Lord Mayor then invited all those present to observe a minute's silence in memory of Cindy Benton, Community Engagement Officer at City of York Council who recently passed away. Cindy was remembered as a diligent officer who provided invaluable assistance to ward members.

#### **41. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jane Burton, Cullwick and Orrell.

#### **42. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **43. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Gwen Swinburn spoke in relation to agenda item 4, the City of York Council Boundary Commission Size Submission. There was concern about a failure to agree on a common number of Councillors and the omission on three critical issues.

First, that it ignored significant disparities in governance and representation between wealthy outer wards and disadvantaged central wards. Guildhall, like other inner wards, lacked parish councils. Unlike York outer wards where parishes dealt with local issues, community engagement and funding, this absence left Guildhall Councillors, for example, solely responsible, significantly increasing their workload and left communities without additional voice or resources.

Second, the draft's claim of York being 12<sup>th</sup> least deprived unitary obscured York central's challenges. It ranked 379 out of 533 constituencies for deprivation compared to York outer's seventh least deprived status. Guildhall's far more significant poverty, health disparities, and transient population resulted in relentless

demands with homelessness, crime, and anti-social behaviour burdens falling heavily on Councillors.

Third, only 52% of Guildhall ward adults registered to vote versus roughly 90% in outer wards, effectively doubling Councillor workload. Councillors served all students, international arrivals, transient, homeless, plus 9 million tourists, and many businesses, all uncouned in workload metrics as only registered voters were counted. By including voter registration data in this submission, it would highlight this inequity supporting more Councillors for inner wards.

#### **44. Scrutiny - Report of the Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee**

The Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report which presented the City of York Council Size Submission (the number of elected councillors).

The Lord Mayor invited the Chair of Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Fenton to move the report.

In moving the report, the following key points were made:

- Councillor Fenton thanked members of the scrutiny task and finish group and officers with support from the Boundary Commission for their work in pulling the report together in a very short period. It was an impressive report and whilst it wasn't possible to arrive at a consensus position the report contained well-argued positions for the Boundary Commission to consider.
- It was reported that minor amendments had been suggested and agreed at the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting on Wednesday, 1 October 2025 and these were reflected in the version presented to this evening's Extraordinary Council meeting.

The Lord Mayor then invited the Vice-Chair of Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Merrett, to second the report.

In seconding the report, the following key points were made:

- Councillor Merrett reported that the scrutiny task and finish group met on four occasions. He wished to place on record

his appreciation to the other members of the task and finish group, Councillors Coles, Hollyer, Steward and Wann. Also, the many officers who provided support with a particular thanks to Julie Gallagher, Head of Democratic Services, who drafted the main part of the report in an incredibly short timescale after recently joining City of York Council. He also thanked Tom Rutherford from the Boundary Commission who attended task and finish group meetings and answered a considerable range of questions about the process and what a good submission looked like.

- It was clear that there was a need to produce a bespoke document setting out the best council size for York, its residents, business community and community needs. The submission should be based on strong evidence to justify the recommendation.
- The submission covered three key areas. First, what was required in terms of good governance. Second, how City of York Council operated effective scrutiny in holding the council and executive to account. And third, the right representation for electors, specifically how many Councillors were needed to cover all the needs of communities, individual matters, community engagement and other aspects of being a Councillor.
- It was made clear that oversimplistic comparisons with other councils using number-based approaches was not encouraged. Evidence justifying the recommendations against specific needs was essential.
- The document presented to Council summarised results from the council's workload survey. It demonstrated the wide variation in individual workloads. In relation to overall size, it was advised that anything outside a range of 30 to 100 Councillors required an exceptional case for the Boundary Commission to give it any serious consideration.

Members' comments were then invited as follows:

- The Leader of the Council thanked everyone involved in the process and the work that had been undertaken in getting to this point. This included officers and members as well as those providing expert guidance and advice on this first stage of the boundary review process.
- It was acknowledged that there had been different recommendations from each political group as well as the independent member. It was now the role of the Boundary

Commission to make its own determination based on the evidence that had been provided.

- It was pointed out that the work of Councillors was not directly tied to the number of electors they represented. Citizens did not stop contacting their Councillors if they were not electors. Councillors were not just working hard in their wards. Other elements included council committees, work with city and ward partners, with community groups, through York's membership of two combined authorities and through the integrated care system and membership of York's health and care partnership.
- The Labour submission suggested the council size of 53 Councillors. That the people of York need committed, accessible, high-quality representation in ensuring the city continued to develop and progress for the benefit of residents. Having enough Councillors to achieve this was a highly important part of that process.
- Councillor Wann reported that each of the political groups and the independent member had an opportunity to make their case. The evidence had been presented openly, and it was now for the Boundary Commission to assess the arguments and make an independent judgment on what number was right for York. It was important that the Boundary Commission was presented with a submission that reflected the city's governance and community realities, not one based on any political preference. The report was professional, well evidenced, and fair in setting out the position of each group, as well as the independent member.
- Councillor Rose reported that members across all political groups were hardworking, dealing with complex case work and multiple ward surgeries each month with both internal and external meetings. Resident needs had grown, and council capacity had been shrinking.

### **Resolved –**

a) To agree the Council's response to the phase one of the Boundary Commission Review, and to note the individual submission of the political groups as included in the report; and

b) To delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer to submit the response to the Boundary

commission.

**Reason for recommendations:**

a) To ensure that the Council provides a submission to the LGBCE in respect of the Council Size issue; and

b) To ensure that such a response is provided to the LGBCE in advance of its deadline for submissions of 17 October 2025.

Councillor Martin Rowley BEM  
LORD MAYOR OF YORK

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and concluded at 6.55 pm)