



<b>Meeting:</b>	Executive
<b>Meeting date:</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2025
<b>Report of:</b>	Garry Taylor, Director of City Development
<b>Portfolio of:</b>	Councillor Pete Kilbane, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economy and Culture

**Decision Report:** York BID ballot for 2026-2031

### **Subject of Report**

1. The York Business Improvement District (BID) is seeking a third five-year term in York City Centre and is undertaking the necessary steps in preparation for a ballot in October 2025.
2. City of York Council is the lead local authority as well as a levy payer.
3. The ballot process will be administered by the Council's Returning Officer acting in the statutory capacity of Ballot Holder, and independently of City of York Council.
4. The BID is a key partner in York, providing complementary, and additional, services in the City Centre.

### **Benefits and Challenges**

5. There are no risks in supporting the ballot.
6. If the BID were to be unsuccessful in winning this ballot, it would mean the loss of multiple City Centre services, annual events and attractions, along with a significant financial detriment.

### **Policy Basis for Decision**

7. The work of the BID is aligned to the following strategies:
  - [York's Economic Strategy 2022-2032](#)
  - [York 2032: The 10-Year Plan](#)

- [Local Transport Strategy](#)

8. In addition, all four of the *Council Plan 2023 – 2027, One City for All* priorities are supported:

**Equalities** – the BID provides equal opportunity for businesses and residents to enjoy the city centre. The vast majority of the programmes events and services are provided free of charge to residents, which means York is as inclusive and accessible as possible. This has been explored in the Equality Impact Assessment attached as Annex C.

**Affordability** – As well as the above, The BID offer multiple events and services that are free to residents, and several, such as the Taxi Marshals and Street Rangers are provided without cost to City Centre users. York Restaurant Week also gives the opportunity to eat out a much-reduced cost.

**Climate** - Part of the remit of the BID is to work towards a ‘cleaner, greener city’ particularly by opening up as much green space as possible, for example, the Minster pocket park near St. William’s College, providing floral displays and bee hotels.

The BID are also consultees on City greening and environmental programmes such as the Riverside Walkway. In addition, the BID enhance the City Centre by providing cleaning services complementary to those of the Council and making York’s environment more attractive through their shop jacket and Mural Trail work.

**Health** – Supporting the maintenance of the City Centre helps to provides a safe and welcoming environment, allowing more people to improve their physical and mental health through exercise, social interaction and the facilities to enjoy their local area. Specific work has included the provision of extra benches in green spaces to allow play and recreation, and York Winter lights are a major draw in the annual calendar.

## **Financial Strategy Implications**

9. The BID is a separate entity from the Council. It is entirely self-funded from individual business levy payments and additional funding leveraged from external sources.

10. Any increase in the levy payment percentage, based on the Business Rate value of a property, is passed onto the occupier of that premises (hereditament). All levy payers are affected by these increases, including the Council.
11. There are plans to increase the levy payment, as set out below, and there are also plans to set a maximum charge cap per hereditament.
12. As per BID ballot regulations, the Council bears responsibility for ballot costs. We have obtained quotes for the outsourcing of the ballot and anticipate a budget requirement in the region of £7k with the chosen provider, Civica. This will be funded from within the service.

### **Recommendation and Reasons**

13. Executive is asked to:
  - a) Support the BID in their campaign to secure a third term in York through a ballot of all businesses in the BID geography
  - b) Request that the Leader of the Council casts the Council's ballot votes in support of a further term
  - c) Note the content the Council's Baseline Service Level Agreements
  - d) Note the role of the York BID as a key City partner in supporting the City Centre economy.

Reason – To approve the BID in their October 2025 ballot for a third five-year BID term, beginning on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

### **Background**

14. The first York BID was created in 2016.
15. The BID is fully established in the City and has introduced a series of family-friendly projects, programmes and attractions that aim to be financially inclusive, enhance the City Centre environment, increase business and trade, and promote and raise the profile of York as a destination.

16. As amendments are to be made to the framework and terms of the existing BID arrangements – see below from para 28 - this is a not a renewal ballot, but an entirely fresh ballot process.

### **BID activity and impact**

17. 892 businesses currently pay a BID levy in York, with a value of around £800,000 per annum.

18. To date, the BID has invested £7.6m in improving and enhancing York City Centre, including services complementary to those already provided by the Council in the baseline agreements (see Annex B) such as street cleansing.

19. The impact of BID activity in the City Centre has been wide-ranging, attracting residents and tourists alike. This is reflected in strong footfall when compared to regional and national peers, and up 7.5% in 2024 from 2023 figures.

20. Spend in the City Centre in 2024 was +1.5% on 2023 figures, with an average of around 2.6 million transactions made per month. Shop vacancy rates in York by the end of 2024 were at their lowest levels - 7.4% - for almost 18 months.

21. Key services, projects and events provided by the BID include: -

- Street cleansing and public realm rejuvenation projects
- Safety Initiatives such as Street Rangers, Taxi Marshals, Riverside Marshals and secure cycle storage – as custodians of York’s Purple Flag status
- The annual Winter Lights Scheme for York city centre
- Business support initiatives such as York Restaurant Weeks, York Gift Card and Shop York in partnership with Indie York
- Seating, floral displays and children’s play for key footfall areas during Summer
- Subsidised skills training for businesses in partnership with York St. John University
- City Centre performance monitoring on data such as footfall, spend, visitor numbers
- Multiple family friendly and cultural events/attractions including Ghosts in the Garden, *Colour and Light* at York Minster, public art through York Mural Trail.

22. The BID Street Cleansing Team are operational in the city seven days a week and are often responsible for clearing away hazardous waste and dangerous materials from city streets which are not addressed as part of general waste collection.

23. Previous ballots were held in 2015 (for 2016) and in 2021.

## **BID Business Plan**

24. The [BID Business Plan](#) sets out the five year aims and ambitions for the work of the BID.

25. In 2021- 2026, their Vision was to:

- Encourage the experience economy
- Be instrumental in shaping a City Centre masterplan in the context of 'evolving high streets'
- Promote green and sustainable initiatives
- Encourage and accessible City Centre and;
- Promote greater integration between digital and physical infrastructure.

26. A draft version of the new Business Plan will be ready in late Summer.

27. For the 2026 – 2031 Business Plan, Members have asked that the BID are particularly mindful of planting in the City Centre, and that they include pollinator-friendly flowers to attract bees.

## **BID geography**

28. A current list of streets contained in the BID geography and a map of the area is included for information at Annex A.

29. The BID Board has reviewed the parameters of the levy payer geography, and has increased the area by ten new streets to include areas within the remit of Purple Flag and other projects.

- Blossom Street
- The Crescent
- Bootham
- Marygate
- Frederic Street
- Marygate Lane

- Esplanade Court
- Layerthorpe
- Eboracum Way
- Heworth Green

30. The inclusion of these streets will increase the number of levy payers to 974 from 2026, up from 892 in the current BID period.

31. Despite this increase, BID levy collection amounts overall are anticipated to be reduced as the 2023 Business Revaluation amounts were £4.16m lower in value than in 2017 for hereditaments in the BID geography.

32. It is mandatory for a map of the BID geography and a list of the streets within it to be sent to Government pre-ballot. A revised map including the additional streets is attached at Annex A.

### **Levy payments and financial arrangements**

33. The current financial framework of the BID is unsustainable as arrangements have been in place since 2016. The BID Board is clear that changes must be implemented to secure operations for a further five-year term.

34. The upcoming ballot provides an opportunity to review the BID arrangements which determine the annual income raised by the levy. Once ratified, these cannot be changed during a term without the intervention of an alteration ballot.

35. The BID Board has agreed to the following changes to the BID financial arrangements. In the event of a successful ballot result, they will come into effect from the start of term 3 (April 2026):

- **Levy Multiplier** - % of rateable value applied to calculate the annual levy charge, raised to every eligible commercial property within the BID area. Set at 1% since 2016.
  - **Increase from 1% to 1.6%.**
- **Inflationary Increase** - % increase applied to the levy multiplier at the start of each new year of operations, to account for inflation. No increase currently set.
  - **Set at 2%.**

- **Maximum Charge Cap** – The maximum annual levy charge raised to any individual commercial property. No cap is currently set.
- **Set at £20,000**

## **Consultation Analysis**

36. The BID Team is responsible for building and maintaining robust working relationships with all potential BID members and is required to engage businesses in every aspect of the process.
37. City Centre businesses and local partners are being consulted during the development phase of the refreshed BID Business Plan and amendments to the financial framework and levy threshold. They will also be made aware of the ballot plans through a concerted campaign.
38. The City of York Council Baseline Agreements have been written with the input of relevant managers from the Council. Baselines are agreed in-house with no external contracting.

## **Options Analysis and Evidential Basis**

39. The options available are to:
- a) Continue to support the work of the BID in York City Centre
  - b) Do not support the work of the BID in the York City Centre
40. Given the benefits of the BID outlined above, and that the BID has had the support of the local business community for the last ten years, the evidence would support approving the BID in progressing their third ballot.
41. If the work of the BID is not approved, the loss of key city centre investment, support for over 900 city centre businesses, cessation of a large number of established services, events and projects would of significant financial and reputational detriment to York.

## **Organisational Impact and Implications**

42. Comments from relevant Service Areas on organisational impact and implications are as follows:

### ***Financial:***

The Council currently provides a service relating to the administration of the levy. The BID pay a fee for such services.

The Council operates a number of properties within the BID area and currently is levied c. £20k per annum. This will increase as the zone is expanded and the levy rate increased. Any ongoing increases will need to be taken into account in the Medium Term Financial Forecast.

***Human Resources (HR):***

There are no HR, ICT or Business Support implications for this report. Further implications will be considered should the ballot not go ahead.

***Legal:***

The local authority must be notified that the BID proposer wishes to put proposals for a BID to a ballot, and the BID proposer must ask the local authority's returning officer to hold that ballot.

The local authority is required to ensure the ballot is operated, either in-house or (more commonly) outsourced, in line with the BID Regulations. The local authority ballot holder remains legally responsible for the ballot process as set out within the Regulations.

The local authority must be satisfied that the final BID proposals include all of the details stated within Schedule 1 to the BID Regulations (the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004) prior to proceeding to ballot.

The mandatory information includes a statement of the existing baseline services provided by the local authority. A Memorandum of Understanding between the local authority and the BID Company provides that the baseline Services shall be reviewed annually by the Council as part of its budget process.

It is best practice for a baseline agreement to be approved at the start of a BID's term.

The ballot must be won on two counts, both a majority by number of votes; and a majority by rateable value of those that turnout to vote with no turnout threshold required.

***Procurement, contact: Head of Procurement.***

Comment pending.



### ***Health and Wellbeing:***

There are no additional public health comments for this paper.

### ***Environment and Climate action***

No direct impacts of the BID ballot have been identified.

The BID undertakes a number of activities which complement the work of the Council in ensuring the BID area is presented well with additional cleaning and refurbishment of street furniture.

As stated within the report (paragraph 8), the BID supports the Council priorities associated with Climate, reflected in actions taken over previous years.

Noting in paragraph 27, the request from Members for the BID to be mindful of planting in the City Centre, and that they include pollinator-friendly flowers to attract bees.

Future activity of the BID should consider the climate impact and support emissions reduction and climate adaptation to support the city in becoming net zero carbon and climate ready.

### ***Affordability, contact: Director of Customer and Communities.***

The BID is not a cost to York Residents. As outlined in the report the BID offer multiple events and services that are free or low cost to residents, and several, such as the Taxi Marshals and Street Rangers are provided without cost to City Centre users.

The implication of not approving the recommendations in this report is that these opportunities for residents will be lost, impacting on their finances or opportunities to access those events and services, and potentially reducing health and wellbeing benefits.

### ***Equalities and Human Rights:***

As per paragraph 8, the BID provides equal opportunity for businesses and residents to enjoy the city centre. Most of the programmes, events and services offered are provided free of charge to residents which has a positive impact on many protected characteristics. A full Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Annex C.

### ***Data Protection and Privacy:***

The Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in

this report and as there are no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out. There is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time, however this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.

### ***Communications:***

The communications implications of the BID ballot include the need for a clear and consistent messaging strategy to inform stakeholders, including businesses and the public, about the benefits of supporting the BID's third term.

Effective communication will highlight the positive impact of BID initiatives on the city's economy, environment, and community cohesion while addressing potential concerns regarding levy increases and geographical expansion. Collaboration between the Council's communication team and the BID will ensure aligned messaging and proactive stakeholder engagement, promoting transparency and building confidence throughout the ballot process.

### ***Economy***

The York BID have been a key partner in the City for the last ten years. During that time, they have made a tangible contribution to the economy of York and the business community they represent, through their varied programmes.

Many of their events are without cost to the public, making them accessible whilst increasing footfall and boosting local businesses. Their focus on safety is attractive to families, and established projects outlined in the report have helped to raise the profile of York for residents and visitors alike, whilst stimulating related employment opportunities.

## **Risks and Mitigations**

43. There are no known risks associated with approval of the recommendation in this report, however, if The BID was to cease operations, there would be a significant detrimental impact to York City Centre and its users.

## **Wards Impacted**

44. Wards directly impacted are:

- Guildhall
- Micklegate
- Fishergate

45. As the work of the BID is accessible to all York residents, all Wards are indirectly impacted.

## Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

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## Background papers

**Previous Executive papers on York Business Improvement District ballots:**

- [31<sup>st</sup> July 2015](#) and
- [14<sup>th</sup> January 2021](#)

## Annexes

- Annex A: List of streets in York BID geography and map
- Annex B: City of York Council Baseline Agreements
- Annex C: Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)