

# City of York Council Size Submission

**October 2025**

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# Introduction:

- 1.1 This document has been developed in response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Electoral Review of the Council size (number of elected councillors) and the number of wards and ward boundaries in York. This submission is made following a decision of the City of York Council ("the Council") at a meeting of Full Council on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025.
- 1.2 The Boundary Commission Review will be undertaken in two distinct phases. Phase one, Council Size, Phase two, Ward Boundaries. This document comprises the Council submission in respect of Phase one of the process. The expectation from the Commission is that at the end of this first phase, the Council will present the Commission with a case for a council size that they believe is right for their authority.
- 1.3 The last Boundary Commission review took place in 2013, and since then the boundaries and Councillor numbers have not changed.
- 1.4 The following pages comprise the Council's size submission, and contain information about the following areas:
  - **Governance and decision-making arrangements.**  
Determining the role of Councillors in decision making, and how work and responsibilities are distributed across the Council.
  - **Scrutiny of Council Functions.**  
Council Structure, member involvement, the role of Elected Members on outside bodies and partnerships.
  - **Representation from local Councillors.**  
Evidence about how Councillors represent and support people and communities, their caseloads and any systems they use to carry out those responsibilities and levels of public participation.
- 1.5 To undertake this work, Elected Members resolved to establish a Task and Finish Group, a subcommittee of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. The Task and Finish Group met on 4 occasions, its members included Councillors Wann, Hollyer, Coles, Steward. The meetings were Chaired by Councillor D Merrett, in attendance at all meetings, was a representative of the Boundary Commission. The

Task and Finish Group was also supported in its work by Officers within the Council, including the Council's Monitoring Officer.

- 1.6 The findings of the task and finish Group were considered at a meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025.
- 1.7 The Council has used a range of sources to understand the current and future needs of York as a city and an area with regards to electoral representation. These include:
  - Office of National Statistics Data
  - The English Indices of Deprivation
  - Public Health England (2020) Public Health Outcomes Framework
  - The Council Constitution
  - Councillor Survey
  - York Council - Local Plan
  - Information supplied by the Boundary Commission
  - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

# Councillor Survey:

- 2.1 Councillors were asked to complete a short survey which included questions on how much time, on average, they spent on committee preparation and attendance, ward work, surgeries, group meetings, and other Council duties. The survey provided an insight into members' time commitments and their Council workloads.
- 2.2 **28 Councillors responded to the survey**. The Headlines from the survey indicate, that there was a significant variation in the amount of time Elected Members reported spending on different activities. For instance, time spent on committee preparation in an average month ranged from 3 to 50 hours, while time dedicated to ward work varied from 4 to 120 hours.
- 2.3 Additional comments included the “significant amount of time” required to undertake tasks, once undertaken by Officers as well as the requirements for attendance at partnership, and “other” meetings as well as liaising with Parish Councils, the Police and public sector organisations.

## **Analysis and conclusions - Councillor Workloads:**

As evidenced by the Councillor survey, Councillors reported that the level of work they were expected to deal with, be that case work, preparing for and attending meetings, surgeries, dealing with emails and social media, community initiatives etc, was high. Whilst Executive members and the Leader, have a particularly heavy burden in terms of both portfolios and additional responsibilities in relation to outside bodies and the Combined Authority, backbench Councillors and shadow Executive Members also reported high demands.

The creation of the Combined Authority and several organisations in which the Council is the sole or majority shareholder has also resulted in an increased number of meetings and requirements to read papers.

# Council Profile:

3.1 The City of York Council is a unitary authority, responsible for all local government services within the City of York, except services provided by town and parish councils; it is one of two local authorities comprising the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority. The Council became a Unitary authority in 1996 as part of national reorganisation, creating the modern, expanded Council area, incorporating areas from previous districts and replacing prior County Council functions for the city. It is currently composed of 47 Councillors, with all Councillors being elected every four years. The city comprises two Parliamentary constituencies: York Central and York Outer. Appendix one includes details of the ward breakdowns.

No. Cllrs	No. Electors	Cllr: Elector Ratio
47	152,989	3,255

	No. Wards
One-Councillor Wards	5
Two-Councillor Wards	6
Three-Councillor Wards	10
Total No. Wards	21

Electoral Imbalance	No. Wards	% Wards
>10%	1	5%
>20%	0	0
>30%	0	0
>40%	0	0

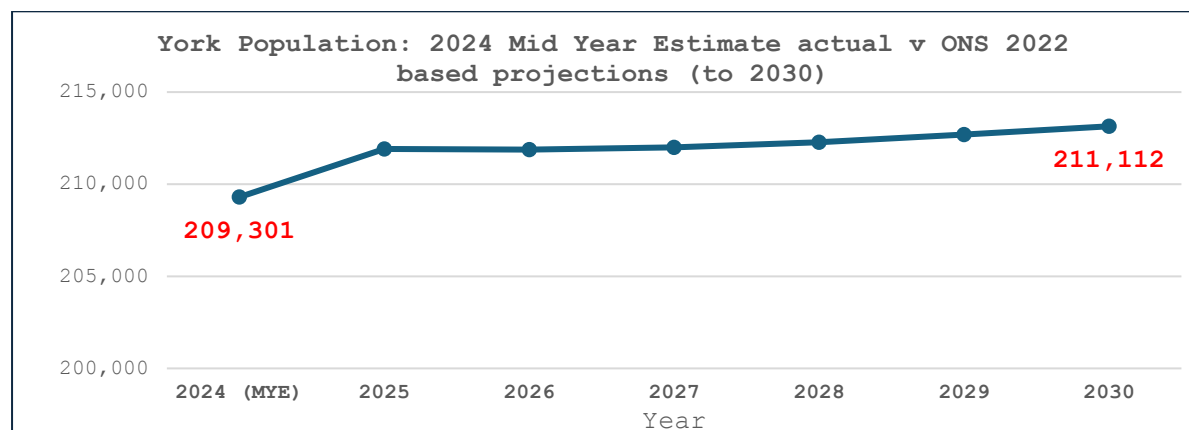
Outliers	Positive	Negative
Hull Road		-16%

3.2 York's has a built-up/urban area of 34 km<sup>2</sup>, making it significantly smaller than many other major cities. Urbanisation is mainly concentrated in the city itself, which acts as the administrative centre for the wider, more rural district and a large portion of the Council's overall area is not urban.

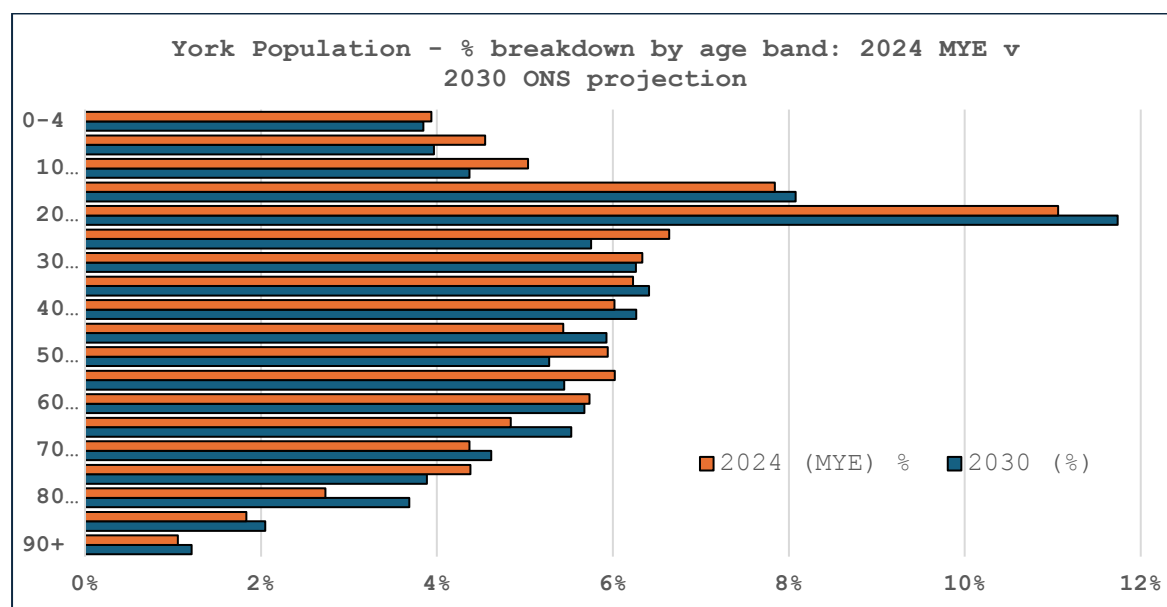
## 3.3 Population Projections for York (2024 to 2030)

The current population of York (based on 2024 mid-year estimates) is **209,301**. The ONS 2022 based population projections predict that this will rise to **211,112** by 2030: a rise of 1,811 people (0.9%); this is the

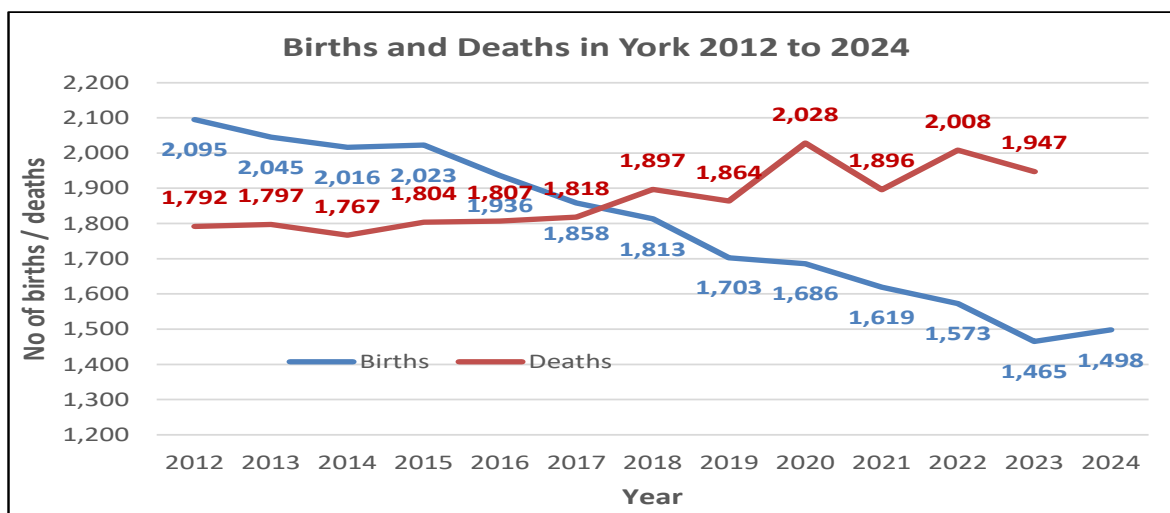
predicted growth excluding any attributed to development. Projections are not available at geographies lower than Local Authority.



The current and projected % breakdown of York's population by age band is shown in the chart below. Some notable changes include a projected 1.3 percentage points **fall** in the proportion in the 0-14 age band and a **rise** of 1.3 percentage points in the proportion in the 80+ age band.



There is a **falling** trend in the number of **births** and a **rising** trend in the number of **deaths** in York. Since 2018 there have been more deaths than births in the City. In 2023 there were 482 more deaths than births. This provides a natural downward pressure on the population of York, however this may be offset by net migration into the City.



More detailed information on mortality rates and comparisons with York's statistical neighbours is available at Appendix 2.

- 3.4 This population includes a substantial student cohort. Currently there are a total of 33,500 students registered to study in York (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2023/2024). Whilst this represents 16% (1 in 6) of the population, not all students reside in York and will travel to the city for their studies.
- 3.5 The city has the third lowest rate of fertility in the Country, (JSNA 2025).
- 3.6 Migration to and from York is a mixed pattern: recent data shows a slight net outflow of internal migration but a significant net inflow of international migration, with figures from 2021 and 2022 showing 3,183 net international arrivals vs 97 net internal departures. Historically, York experienced population growth between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, with international migration a key driver of this increase. York is the 14<sup>th</sup> most transient population in England
- 3.7 Electorate Forecast Figures

The City of York Council has officially adopted the City of York Local Plan 2017-2033 on 27 February 2025, following extensive public consultation and independent examination. The Local Plan provides a comprehensive strategy for the development and use of land in the city up until 2033, setting out policies that will guide future growth and investment. The Local Plan is going to accelerate housing and population growth and therefore the Council has used this data to provide updated forecasts of population that the ONS population predictions do not take in to account.

2025 Electorate	156099
2031 CYC predication of Electorate	170046

The figures from the Council include:

- Planning permission **approved for** over 20 **homes** up to 2031
- Local Plan **allocations** up to 2031
- Where any Local Plan site crosses a polling district boundary this has been split to reflect % of area in each polling district.
- Where a polling district has no LP/planning permission the Electoral boundary commission 2031 predictions have been used.

By means of comparison, the total electorate in the district was 155,308 in 2012 and 164,910 in 2019 (Boundary Commission Report).

3.8 York welcomes over 9 million tourists per year. (JSNA 2025). The City of York Council monitor various datasets on Hotel Occupancy, visits to attractions and footfall. These indicate that tourism levels in York are relatively consistent all year-round rather than exhibit seasonal patterns seen in coastal destinations. There are between 2200 and 2300 active listings on Airbnb/Vrbo illustrating a large number of short-term lets and tourism within the city.

3.9 Socio and Economic issues in York - York is ranked 140 out of 151 upper tier local authority districts (UTLA). York is the **12<sup>th</sup> least deprived UTLA in England**. York has **risen 5 places** in the rankings since 2015 when it was the 17<sup>th</sup> least deprived UTLA. York is ranked 140 out of 151 upper tier local authority districts (UTLA) on average IMD score (1 is most deprived) so York is the **12<sup>th</sup> least deprived UTLA in England**.



## Households

Number of households	88,352 (2024/2025)
% pensioner households (aged 65 years of over)	23.7%
% households having more than one adult with dependent children	17.5%
% single parent households with dependent children	5.3%
Full time student population	29,915 (2023/2024)
% population - BME Community	7.3%
Workless Households as a % of all Households	9.8% (2023/2024)
% children under 16 in Workless Households	8.8% (2023/2024)
% of Children (aged 0-15) living in low income families	15.8% (2024/2025)
% households in fuel poverty	12.27% (2023/2024)
2nd least deprived local authority district in the Yorkshire and Humber region (2019)	
York has 1 neighbourhood ranked in the top 10% most deprived nationally (2019)	



## Health and Social Care

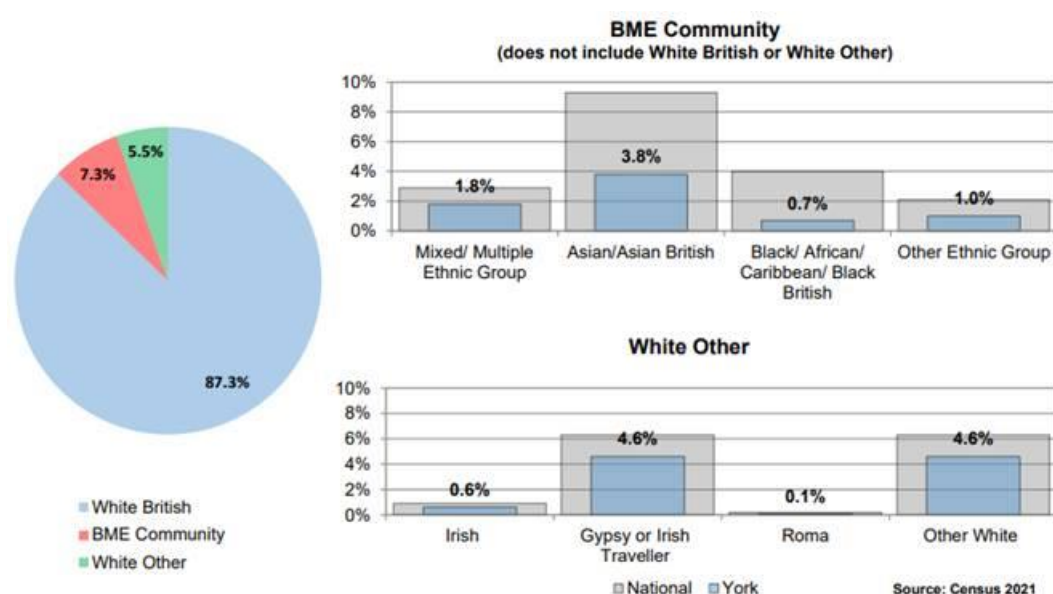
Life expectancy at birth (Male) - (yrs)	79.77 (2023/2024)
Healthy life expectancy (Male) - (yrs)	62.01 (2023/2024)
Life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived deciles in York (Male) - (yrs)	10.08 (2023/2024)
Life expectancy at birth (Female) - (yrs)	83.61 (2023/2024)
Healthy life expectancy (Female) - (yrs)	62.68 (2023/2024)
Life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived deciles in York (Female) - (yrs)	6.71 (2023/2024)
% residents who said they had very good or good health	83.6%
Number of adults receiving social care services	2873 (2025)
Number of children looked after	245 (Apr (2025/2026))
% of reception year children recorded as being obese	8.80% (2023/2024)
% of children in Year 6 recorded as being obese	19.20% (2023/2024)



## Housing

Number of social housing dwellings	7,374 (Year 2023/2024)
Number of active applicants registered on the CYC Waiting List	1,565 (2024/2025)
% council tenants surveyed feel rent provides value for money	63.88% (Year 2024/2025)
% population who own their own home (outright or with a mortgage)	65%
% population renting privately	20%
% population renting social housing	14%
Average House Price	£299,489 (Feb 2024/25)
Number to multiply average annual salary by to reach median house price	8.5 (Year 2023/24)
Net Additional Homes Provided	459 (2022/2023)

3.9 York has a predominately white British Population at just over 87%.



### **Analysis and Conclusions - Council Profile:**

York has a reputation for being a city in good health, with a growing economy, high skills and a strong community fabric, there are many assets and things which keep people healthy. The city has declining life expectancy, similar levels of preventable disease as other areas, large health gaps between richer and poorer communities, as well as some key areas of health need.

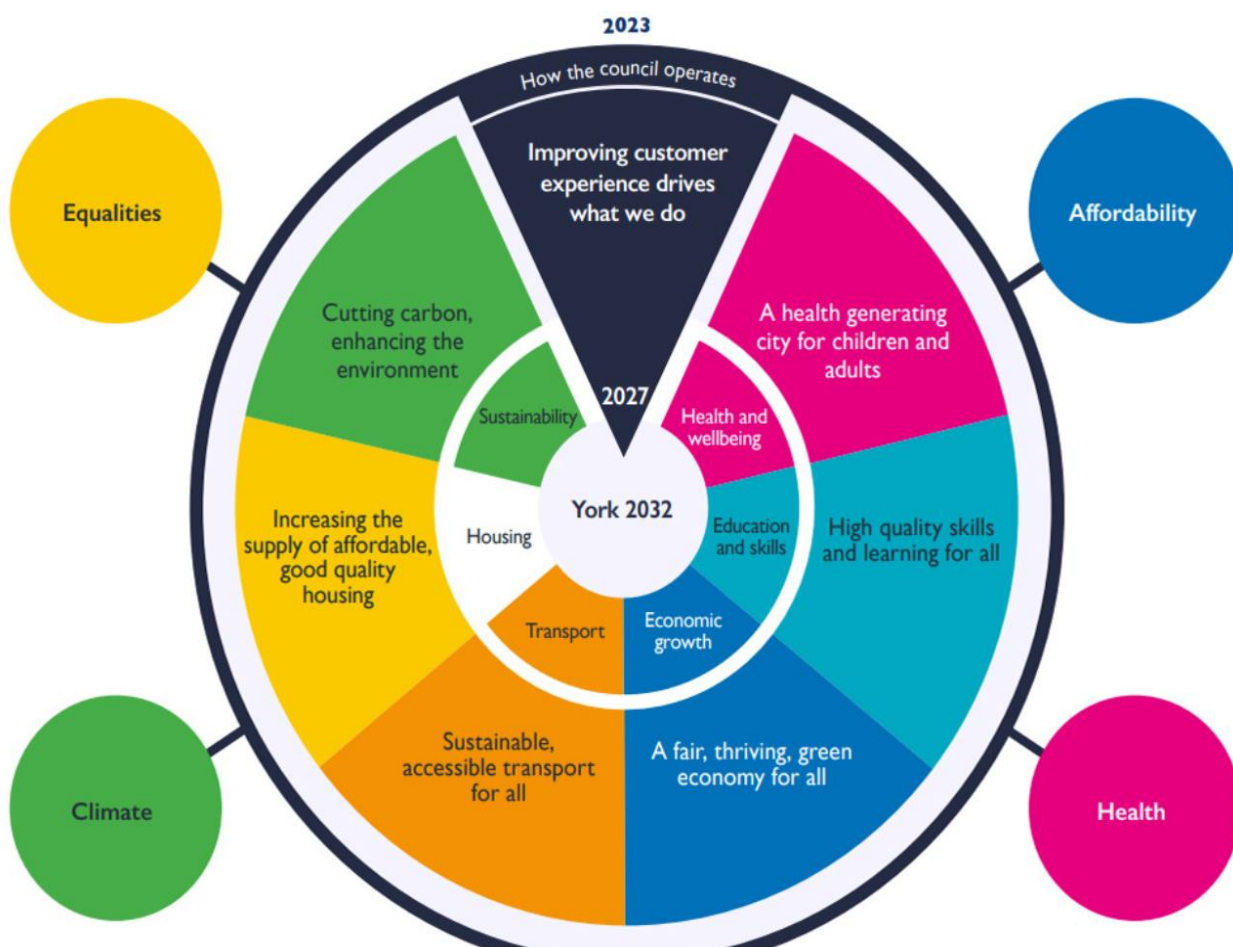
One in 6 of York's residents are students; the area is the 14<sup>th</sup> most transient in the Country and also welcomes over 9 million tourists a year. These factors add significant pressure to Elected Members in undertaking their roles.

Members commented in the course of the task and finish groups work, that variations in ward types — such as those with a high concentration of businesses, areas with complex needs, rural communities, and those with highly engaged residents — can also contribute to increased pressures on Elected Members' workloads.

In addition, Elected Members reported, that three-member wards enable workload sharing among Councillors, which is especially beneficial for those serving on Executive committees. They also provide coverage during absences due to illness, holidays, or parental leave, and offer residents alternative points of contact.

# Corporate Plan One City for All 2023 to 2027:

In 2023 York Council launched its new Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan, led by Elected Members, sets out a bold vision for York and builds on the Council's strengths. The plan establishes four key priorities for the Council:



- **Equality and Human Rights:**  
Equality of opportunity - We will create opportunities for all, providing equal opportunity and balancing the human rights of everyone to ensure residents and visitors alike can benefit from the city and its strengths. We will stand up to hate and work hard to champion our communities
- **Affordability:**  
Tackling the cost-of-living crisis - We will find new ways so everyone who lives here benefits from the success of the city, targeting our support at those who need it most, supporting communities to build on their own strengths and those of the people around them.

- **Climate:**  
Environment and the climate emergency - We know the race to net zero is more urgent than ever and we will understand the impact our actions have on the environment. We will prepare for the future, adapting our city to extreme climate events and enhancing our environment for future generations to enjoy.
- **Health:**  
Health and wellbeing - We will improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities, taking a Health in All Policies approach, with good education, jobs, travel, housing, better access to health and social care services and environmental sustainability. We will achieve better outcomes by targeting areas of deprivation, aiming to level opportunity across the city.

### **Analysis and Conclusions - Corporate Plan:**

The Corporate Plan is integral to everything the Councillors do. Councillors lead the development of the Corporate Plan and play a central role in delivering York Council's ambitious vision through collaboration across the Council, with external partners, and the Combined Authority.

# Governance Model:

- 5.1 The City of York Council has 47 Councillors and twenty-one wards, each represented by between one and three Councillors. The Council elects all Councillors on a four-year cycle. The regular election of all Councillors is held on the first Thursday in May every four years. The current political make-up of the council is as follows:

**Labour/Labour & Co-operative:24**

**Liberal Democrats: 19**

**Conservative: 3**

**Independents: 1**

**Vacancy: 0**

**The Council currently has a Labour administration.**

- 5.2 York Council operates an Executive model of governance with an Executive of 8 Elected Members. The Executive meets monthly and in public, with additional meetings arranged as required. The Leader of the main opposition party is also invited to attend Executive in a non-voting capacity.
- 5.3 Following the review of Scrutiny procedures that took place during 2024-2025, Council resolved to reduce the number of scrutiny committees from four to three, and to reschedule the formal business meetings of those committees to meet bimonthly.
- 5.4 In addition, there are regular Executive Member portfolio meetings as well as meetings of the Executive Corporate Management in which Executive Members receive information and briefings ahead of the formal Executive meeting. These meetings allow for discussion of issues coming forward and amendments to final reports. The meetings take place fortnightly.
- 5.5 At Annual Council, a revised Executive Member Decision Session schedule was agreed. Previously, one meeting per month was scheduled for each of the eight portfolio holders. This was replaced by two meetings per month, with one monthly session dedicated to decisions that fall within the Transport portfolio; the other will include decisions for consideration by the Executive Leader, Deputy Leader

and the remaining five portfolio holders in a “Combined Executive Member Decision Session”.

- 5.6** Executive Members cannot be members of scrutiny committees.
- 5.7** Currently the members of the Executive also meet informally every two weeks for two to three hours to discuss Council business and agree approaches. (There is no officer involvement in these meetings.)
- 5.8** York has a ceremonial Right Honourable Lord Mayor, elected by the Council at its Annual Meeting, from amongst serving Councillors. The Right Honourable Lord Mayor will preside at meetings of the Full Council and ensure that it is carried out fairly and efficiently. If a vote is required at full Council and if there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the Right Honourable Lord Mayor will have a second or casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the Right Honourable Lord Mayor chooses to exercise a casting vote.
- 5.9** It is important to note that there is very limited delegation of decision to officers in York. This means that Elected Members need to maintain in-depth knowledge and understanding of their portfolio areas, supported by officers.
- 5.10** The council would not have sufficient officer capacity, to support a committee model of governance, and it would also place more demands on elected member time to attend more meetings and deal with programmes of work.
- 5.11** The establishment of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority in 2024 has led to the council working together with North Yorkshire Council and the Combined Authority Mayor toward areas of common interest.
- 5.12** The Council meets every two months, and meetings can normally last 3.5 hours. In the municipal year 2025, 2026 the Council have facilitated two additional extraordinary Council meetings.

**5.13** A list of all meetings, its membership and frequency are detailed below:

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
Full Council	X6 per year (plus Extraordinary Council Meetings, as required)	All Elected Members
Executive	Monthly	All Executive Members plus Opposition Group Leader (non-voting)
Private Executive	X2 per month	Exec Members and officers, as required
Executive / Corporate Management Team (CMT)	X2 per month	All Members of Executive and CMT
Combined Executive Member Decision Session	Monthly	Relevant Executive Members
Executive Member for Transport Decision Session	Monthly	Executive Member for Transport
Group Leaders	X8 per year (approximately)	All Political Group Leaders
Scrutiny Review Working Group	Monthly	Eight Elected Members (Chairs and Vice Chairs of former Scrutiny Committees)
Corporate Scrutiny Committee	X6 per year	Nine Elected Members
People Scrutiny Committee	X6 per year	Nine Elected Members
Place Scrutiny Committee	X6 per year	Nine Elected Members
Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups	Recommended that no more than two task and finish groups per Scrutiny Committee at any one time	Five Elected Members per Task and Finish Group
Audit and Governance Committee	Every 8 weeks	Seven Committee Members plus one Independent Member
Planning Committee A	Monthly	Eleven Elected Members

Planning Committee B	Monthly (until October, when it will be abolished)	Nine Elected Members
Licensing and Regulatory Committee	X4 per year	Fifteen Elected Members
Licensing and Regulatory Committee – Sub Committee	Ad hoc	Licensing hearings comprise of three Elected Members from Licensing and Regulatory Committee
Joint Standards Committee	X6 per year	Five Elected Members, Three Parish Councillors and Two Independent Members
Joint Standards Committee – Assessments Sub-Committee	X5 per year	Two Elected Members, One Parish Councillor, One Independent Member
Health and Wellbeing Board	X6 per year	Four Elected Members (including Executive Members for Children, Young People and Education and Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care)
Shareholder Committee	X6 per year	Two Executive Members
Staffing Matters and Urgency Committee	X7 per year (approximately)	Three Executive Members
Ward Committees	As required	Ward Members

## 5.14 Executive Member Portfolios:

The Executive Member Sessions meet as detailed above/ Additional meetings are arranged as required. The Executive Member is the decision maker.

The Executive Member portfolios are split as follows:

- 1 Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Policy, Strategy and Partnerships  
Councillor Claire Douglas, with responsibilities for:
  - Policy, Strategy and Partnerships
  - Communications and Media

- Legal, Democratic and Civic Support
- Regional and National Matters
- Emergency Planning
- Armed Forces Covenant

2 Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economy and Culture

Councillor Peter Kilbane, with responsibilities for:

- Economic Development and Strategy
- Regeneration
- Tourism
- High Streets
- Business Friendly Council and Business Support
- Skills Development and Apprenticeships
- Leisure and Sport
- Arts, Music, Culture and Heritage
- Libraries
- Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

3 Executive Members for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion

Councillor Katie Lomas, with responsibilities for:

- Customer Services
- Bereavement and Registrar
- Human Resources and Payroll
- Human Rights, Equalities and Inclusion
- ICT
- Information Management
- Financial Management and Strategy Annex B1
- Investment and Commercialisation
- Financial Procedures and Risk Management
- Financial Inclusion
- Performance and Business Assurance
- Procurement Services and Commissioning
- Fraud • Asset Management
- Operational Accommodation
- Facilities Management
- Health and Safety Operational Standards
- Major Project delivery - Finance and Programme management

4 Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities

Councillor Michael Pavlovic, with responsibilities for:

- Community Consultation and Engagement

- Ward Committees
- Community Centres
- Volunteering
- Parish Council Liaison
- Planning Policy, Conservation and Urban Design
- Neighbourhood Planning
- Planning and Development Management
- Building Control
- Housing
- Tenant Engagement
- Homelessness
- Community Safety and Safer Neighbourhoods
- Safer York Partnership
- Police liaison
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Community Cohesion
- Prevent

#### 5 Executive Member for Transport

Councillor Kate Ravilious, with responsibilities for:

- Civil Engineering and Highways
- Cycling Infrastructure
- Parking Services and Parking Strategy
- Transport Strategy Annex B1
- Travel Planning
- Highways Strategy
- Taxi Licensing (in conjunction with Chair of Licensing)
- Street Lighting
- Digital Infrastructure
- Local, Regional and National Transport Infrastructure
- Fleet Management

#### 6 Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

Councillor Bob Webb, with responsibilities for:

- Children's Social Care
- School Improvement and Organisation
- Children and Families
- Early Intervention and Local Area Teams
- Youth Support Services
- School Place Planning
- Children's Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs
- Children's Centres and Early Years

- Youth Offending
- Poverty

7 Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care

Councillor Lucy Steels-Walshaw, with responsibilities for:

- Health and Social Care Integration
- Public Health and Health Inequalities
- Substance Misuse
- Mental Health Services
- Domestic Violence
- Services for Carers
- Adult Social Care and Safeguarding
- Local Area Co-ordination
- Assessment and Personalisation
- Residential, Home and Respite Care
- Older People
- Learning Disabilities

8 Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency

Councillor Jenny Kent, with responsibilities for:

- Flood Protection
- Community Environment
- Waste Management and Recycling
- Street Environment
- Environment Strategy
- Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Air Quality
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Energy Transition and Energy Security
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Licensing Policy (in conjunction with Chair of Licensing)
- Regulatory Enforcement
- Health and Safety Enforcement
- Public Protection and Trading Standards
- Environmental Health and Food Hygiene

### **5.15 Delegated Decision Making:**

Executive Member Sessions play a significant role in decision making. Please refer to the Scheme of Delegation provided as an appendix.

Executive Members do make major decisions individually but will often refer more sensitive decisions to the Executive for decision; however, they are constitutionally prevented from taking Key Decisions.

# Accountability:

## Internal Scrutiny

Following a recent Local Government Association Peer Challenge, the Council embarked on a series of changes to the Scrutiny function. The purpose of the new structure was to change the culture of the organisation in the way that it conducts scrutiny, to develop a shared vision across the authority and to ensure application of best practices along with statutory and non-statutory guidance, to ensure scrutiny processes are effective and aligned with national standards.

- 6.1 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee is Chaired by an opposition Member, both the People and Place Scrutiny Committees are Chaired by members of the ruling group, who are appointed by the Council. Members of the Executive are expected to attend committee meetings relevant to their portfolios.
- 6.2 There are currently six scrutiny meetings per year for each committee, as well as ad hoc call-in meetings, arranged as required.
- 6.3 In addition, there is a Scrutiny Review Working Group consisting of chairs and vice-chairs of the four previous and three current scrutiny committees which meets informally on a monthly basis. In the previous 12 months (September 2024 to September 2025) there has been one call in meetings with Member and Officer time required not only for the scrutiny committees, but also for the subsequent referrals to other meetings as part of the scrutiny process.
- 6.4 It is envisaged that the new changes to the scrutiny function should see a reduction in called in decisions going forward.
- 6.5 Three Scrutiny task and finish groups have been established in last 12 months to review a variety of subjects, it is anticipated that additional task and finish groups will be established going forward.
- 6.6 Members are also required to sit on the Corporate Appeals Panel, 6 members and substitutes are appointed by Council to consider all appeals matters. Meetings are arranged as and when required.

## **Analysis and Conclusions - Governance and Accountability:**

Given the current proposals set out in the Government's English Devolution White Paper, which reinforce the role of elected Mayors and the Leader and Executive model, this continues to be the most appropriate governance model for York Council.

Furthermore, as the Council has recently reviewed both the Scrutiny Structure and the operation of Executive decision-making, it has not considered a further review of the overall governance system to be necessary.

Members of the working group suggested that having an odd number of Councillors would be preferable, given that the Right Honourable Lord Mayor holds the casting vote at Council

# Statutory Functions:

## Planning Committee

- 7.1 At the Full Council Meeting held on 18 September, Members agreed changes to the Planning Committee structure. The changes were made with awareness of Central Government's intentions to introduce a national delegation scheme for planning, aimed at improving planning performance. Although there is currently no confirmed timeline for these changes, they strongly indicate the future direction for planning committees. It is therefore appropriate to consider a revised structure and operating model for the Council's planning committees to better align with this anticipated direction.
- 7.2 It is envisaged that these changes will also serve to ensure more efficient and effective decision-making in the planning service. It was agreed that Planning Committee B would be abolished, and the Planning Committee A will be renamed Planning Committee; The Scheme of Delegation for planning was subsequently amended.
- 7.3 The Planning Committee meets on a monthly basis, Meetings are also added to the calendar, as and when required. Members of the planning committee are required to undertake training as they join the Committee, and additional ad hoc training is also arranged. Planning Committee members are also required to attend site visits; the planning visits are usually virtual. 11 members make up the Committee, substitutes are also appointed.
- 7.4 In addition, Elected Members are also appointed to a separate Planning Policy Group.

## Licensing and Regulatory Committee and Licensing/Gambling Hearings Panel

- 7.5 The Licensing and Regulatory Committee meets on a monthly basis, and meetings of the hearings panel are arranged on an ad-hoc basis. There have been 13 meetings of the Hearings Panel in this municipal Year (May to 31st September 2025). Members are required to attend training prior to sitting on the Committee and also ad hoc training as and when required. There are 15 members on the Committee and meetings usually last 1 to 2 hours.

## Other Regulatory Bodies

- 7.6 In addition, the Council operates an Audit and Governance Committee, with a membership of 7, Chaired by an Opposition

Member appointed by Council. The Committee meets 6 times a year with additional meetings arranged at the request of the Chair. The Committee provides oversight, of the Council Constitution, risk, all financial matters, and internal and external audits.

- 7.7 The Council also operates a Joint Standards Committee the committee consists of 5 elected members and 3 Parish Councillors. One of the main focuses of the committee is the promotion of a culture of openness, accountability, probity and the maintenance of high standards of conduct by members and co-opted Members of the Councils and other Parish Councils.

### **Analysis and Conclusions – Council Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees:**

York Council fulfils its legal requirements in appointments to the respective Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees. Membership of these committees — most of which still require in-person attendance — will involve undertaking additional training, developing an understanding of complex administrative matters, reviewing extensive reading materials, and the regular attendance of Executive Members. Additionally, members must be available at short notice to address urgent issues.

# Appointments to Outside Bodies:

## 8.1 External partnerships

Elected members are appointed to 92 external bodies. For the 2025/26 municipal year, appointments have been made to each of these, currently comprising a total of 175 member appointments excluding substitutes. There are a small number of bodies with at least one elected member vacancy.

Of 47 elected members, 44 are currently appointees to at least one external body (93.6%). 35 members are appointees to two or more external bodies (74.5%), and 11 members are appointees to five or more external bodies (23.4%).

External partnerships include the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority and its various committees, other regional organisations, charities, companies and community organisations. A summary of the current position is detailed below, including details (where available) of meeting frequency.

## 8.2 External body appointments 2025/26

Outside Body	Number of elected members appointed	Typical number of meetings per year
<b>a. Joint Committees administered by other Councils</b>		
Leeds City Region Business Rates Pool Joint Committee	1	2
North Yorkshire Pension Fund Committee	1	5
Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London (PATROL) Adjudication Joint Committee	1	1
Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Management Committee	1	2
Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Audit and Governance Sub-Committee	1	2
<b>b. Regional Local Authority Bodies</b>		
York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority	2	9
York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Business Board	2	4

York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Audit and Governance Committee	4	4
York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	4
York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Skills and Employability Working Group	2	-
York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Advisory Board	1	4
North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel	3	6
Regional Audit Committee Forum (Yorkshire & Humberside)	1	3
Yorkshire and Humber Leaders Board	1	4
West Yorkshire Business Board (formerly Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Board)	1	6
West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA)	1	8
West Yorkshire Combined Authority – Transport Committee	1	5
West Yorkshire Combined Authority – Scrutiny Committee	1	9
West Yorkshire Combined Authority - Climate, Energy and Environment Committee	1	4
West Yorkshire Combined Authority - Culture, Heritage & Sport Committee	1	4
West Yorkshire Combined Authority – Economy Committee	1	3
West Yorkshire Combined Authority - Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee	1	4
<b>c. Other Bodies</b>		
Ainsty 2008 Internal Drainage Board (IDB)	2	4
Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE)	1	1
British Sugar Community Forum	4	*
Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum	4	12
City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership	1	6
City of York Trading Company	3	12
City Place Partnership (a City Leaders group)	1	4
Clifton Backies Management Board	3	2
Derwenthorpe Partnership Advisory Committee	2	4
f40	1	
Foss 2008 Internal Drainage Board (IDB)	10	5
Fostering & Sharing Care Panel	1	12
Friends of St Nicholas Fields	1	6
Fulford Parish Council Cemetery Committee	1	2
Germany Beck Community Forum	2	*
Heslington East Community Forum	2	*
Higher York	1	

Holocaust Memorial Day Steering Group	1	8
Human Rights and Equalities Board	3	4
Joint Member Working Group on the Joint Mineral and Waste Plan	2	4
Kyle and Upper Ouse Internal Drainage Board (IDB)	1	3
Leeds & York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (Mental Health and Learning Disabilities)	1	4
Leeman Road Millennium Green Trust	1	4
Local Government Association – Councillors’ Forum	1	4
Local Government Association – General Assembly	4	1
Local Transport Plan Steering Group	7	
Make It York Board	2	5+
Migration Yorkshire Board	1	2
North Yorkshire Flood Risk Partnership	1	4
North Yorkshire Pension Fund – Local Pension Board	1	4
Ouse and Derwent Internal Drainage Board (IDB)	2	4
Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Yorkshire and the Humber	1	2
Safer York Partnership	1	2
Schools Effectiveness and Achievement Monitoring Group	4	6
Schools Forum	1	4
Shopmobility York	1	4
SNAPPY	1	8
St Michael le Belfrey with St Wilfrid Charities for the Poor	1	
St Wilfrid’s Eleemosynary Charity	2	1
Strategic City Leaders (a City Leaders group)	1	4
Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust	1	6
Terry’s Community Forum	6	*
Veritau Limited	1	4
Work with York Limited	3	12
York Business Improvement District (BID)	2	6
York Central Lead Members	8	12
York Citizens Theatre Trust	3	4
York City Charities	2	4
York Climate Commission	1	6
York Culture Forum Executive	1	6
York Enhanced Partnership for Buses	5	2
York Environment Forum	3	12
York Fair Trade Forum	1	12
York Health and Care Partnership	2	12
York Hungry Minds Steering Group	1	3
York Learning Improvement Board	1	4
York Museums Trust	2	4

York Outer Ring Road (YORR) Lead Members Board	3	4
York and Scarborough NHS Trust Council of Governors	1	12+
York's Economic Partnership (a City Leaders group)	1	2
York Skills & Employment Board	1	6
York UK Shared Prosperity Fund Partnership Board	2	2
York Wheels	1	12
York and North Yorkshire Housing Partnership	1	
Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission	1	4
Yorkshire & Humber (Local Authorities) Employers Association	1	4
Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Migration Group	1	3
Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Procurement Holdings Limited	1	2
Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (jointly with NYCC), including Programming and Investment sub-group	1	8
Yorwaste	1	8
<i>*frequency of meetings led by development process.</i>		

# Role of the Combined Authority:

- 9.1 York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA) was established following the agreement of a Devolution Deal for the region with Government on 1 August 2022. Legislation to create the Combined Authority followed in 2023.
- 9.2 The creation of the Combined Authority introduced a new, strategic tier of local government in the region, designed to operate across the full geographic footprint of York and North Yorkshire.
- 9.3 Although YNYCA is one of the smallest Combined Authorities in England in terms of constituent membership, it covers one of the largest geographic areas nationally. It is led by a Directly Elected Mayor, who also serves as Chair of the Combined Authority.
- 9.4 The Combined Authority provides a platform for delivering region-wide priorities, with members expected to adopt a strategic, cross-boundary perspective that complements - but is distinct from - their ward or division-based roles within their own authorities.

## 9.5 Functions of the Combined Authority:

The York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority is responsible for the following devolved functions:

- Adult Education and Skills (now Adult Skills Fund)
- Transport
- Economic Regeneration
- Housing
- Net Zero, Climate Change and Natural Capital
- Police and Crime Commissioner Functions
- Fire and Rescue

## 9.6 Governance Structure:

### a. Combined Authority

The Combined Authority typically meets around 10 times per year. Meetings are chaired by the Mayor and attended by two members appointed by each constituent council (a lead member and one other). Each member has two named substitutes.

b. Statutory Committees

Under the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017, the Combined Authority has established two statutory committees:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee
  - 12 Members (6 from each constituent authority)
  - One named substitute per member
- Audit and Governance Committee
  - 9 Members (4 from each authority, plus 1 independent member)
  - One named substitute per member

Memberships are appointed by the Combined Authority and must, as far as practicable, reflect the political balance of the constituent councils when taken together.

c. Non-Statutory Advisory Committees

In addition to its statutory committees, YNYCA operates two advisory bodies:

- Business Board – Private sector-led, along with two representatives from each constituent authority
- Transport Advisory Board – Attended by the Executive Member for Transport from each constituent authority

All committees and advisory boards meet formally on a quarterly basis, and each holds an informal mid-cycle briefing to support ongoing work and information flow between meetings.

## **9.7 Organisational Structure and Legal Status:**

The York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority is a distinct legal entity, established by law and separate from its constituent councils. It is not a partnership or joint committee arrangement, but a corporate body with the ability to receive funding directly, hold devolved powers, employ staff, and enter into contracts.

In line with legislative requirements, the Combined Authority has appointed its own statutory officers:

- Head of Paid Service
- Section 73 Officer (responsible for financial administration)
- Monitoring Officer (responsible for legal compliance and governance)

The Combined Authority also has a dedicated Leadership Team and staffing structure, which supports delivery of its functions across transport, skills, housing, economic development, and other areas.

Formal meetings and committees are supported by Democratic Services and Scrutiny Support staff, who provide agenda and meeting management, procedural advice, and governance support.

## **9.8 Member Responsibilities and Demands:**

Combined Authority members - and those appointed to its committees - hold responsibilities that are distinct from their ward or division roles within their home councils. These responsibilities include:

- a. Representing the strategic interests of the region
- b. Participating in decision-making, scrutiny, and audit processes
- c. Attending formal meetings and informal briefings
- d. Engaging with stakeholders, businesses, and the public on devolved matters
- e. Complying with ethical standards, including:
  - Maintaining a register of interests
  - Recording gifts and hospitality
  - Adhering to the Combined Authority's Code of Conduct

As formal meetings must be held in person for legal and procedural reasons, the large geography of the Combined Authority area can present logistical and time challenges, particularly for members travelling from more remote areas.

The Combined Authority has been supportive of calls for remote attendance at meetings and embraces the use of technology wherever possible to improve transparency and accessibility to meetings.

## **9.9 Future Development of the Combined Authority**

The Government's English Devolution White Paper and the forthcoming Devolution Bill signal a direction of travel towards greater powers, responsibilities and autonomy for Combined Authorities. Over the next five years, the scope and scale of YNYCA's work is expected to grow.

## **Analysis of the establishment of the Combined Authority and the responsibilities of Elected Members:**

York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority represents a formally established, legally distinct institution that operates across a large and diverse region. It provides a strategic layer of governance alongside the constituent councils and is supported by its own statutory officers, staff, and governance infrastructure.

Elected members involved in the Combined Authority undertake roles that are strategic, region-wide, and separate from their responsibilities within constituent councils. As the Combined Authority's functional remit expands – particularly in areas that are increasingly public-facing, transactional, and complex – the demands placed on those members are expected to increase, particular with the development of more advisory boards.

In addition, York Council is a non-voting Member of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and will be required to attend meeting pertinent to York.

# Community Involvement and Public Participation:

- 10.1 The Council has a long track record of working closely with its communities, both directly and via partner organisations.
- 10.2 York Council maintains strong “well exercised” public engagement, with regular opportunities for public participation and frequent attendance by members of the public at formal Council meetings.
- 10.3 All Council meetings are open to the public, there is a maximum period of 30 minutes at each meeting to listen to public speakers. Each person registered to speak is allocated a maximum time of 3 minutes and there will be a maximum of 10 registered public speakers at each meeting, these are registered on a first come first served basis
- 10.4 Members of the public can also make representations at Planning and Licensing meetings, however different rules apply.
- 10.5 In addition to attending meetings and submitting questions, members of the public can engage with Elected Members by submitting petitions, either through their local councillor, online, or via paper submissions.
- 10.6 Elected Members also host surgeries in their wards, providing further opportunities to engage with members of the public. In addition, Councillors are governors at schools in their area.
- 10.7 All public council meetings are now live streamed and recorded for later viewing. A forward plan of decisions, all agendas and non-confidential reports are published on the council’s website in advance of meetings. Minutes of all Committee meetings are published online. All relevant reports require an Equality Impact Assessment and consultation with staff, partners, residents and other stakeholders takes place where appropriate.
- 10.8 Ward Funding and ward meetings – Each ward area receives funding of between Eight thousand and twenty-five thousand pounds. These grants are awarded to constituted groups that support the delivery of the Council’s priorities, as set out in the Council Plan *One City, For All 2023–2027*. In addition, Councillors hold ward meetings as needed—often in response to specific local issues, such as flooding.

- 10.9 The Changing role of the Councillor – The role of an Elected Member has changed. The prevalence of social media has resulted in Councillors becoming more visible within their electoral areas, both in terms of being contactable and also in terms of messaging and awareness raising of their roles and the services and initiatives the council provides and delivers. Elected members have had a critical role to play in conveying complex and constantly changing messages from central government, health authorities and the council, working both independently and together with partner organisations such as faith groups and voluntary and community groups.
- 10.10 Casework – There is currently no central casework management system in place for overseeing Elected Member casework in York. As a result, casework is submitted individually by councillors directly to Council officers. Members are supported in this work, by political assistants.
- 10.11 Training and support - Elected Members are supported to undertake their duties with a comprehensive Member Induction package compliment by continuous in year training.

### **Analysis and Conclusion Public Participation:**

Public participation is a key part of democratic local government and enables residents to engage directly with decision-making processes. Councillors play a central role in facilitating this participation and representing their communities.

They are a vital link between the public and the Council, ensuring that community voices are heard and considered in local governance.

Yorks's residents actively participate and engage not only with local Councillors but in decision making too.

The role of Elected Members has evolved significantly with the rise of social media, and Councillors often feel the pressure to be constantly available to address constituents' concerns.

# Conclusion:

Drawing on all the evidence and information provided in this document, it is clear that a significant level of Elected Member capacity is required to ensure that the Council's duties and responsibilities are discharged effectively and efficiently. The survey of Elected Members demonstrates high work demands and knowledge and expertise.

In recent years, the role of Councillors has become increasingly complex and demanding. This growth in responsibilities is driven by a variety of factors, placing significant pressures on Elected Members as they seek to serve their communities effectively.

- Councillors now deal with a wider range of local issues, including social care, housing, environmental concerns, economic development, and digital inclusion.
- Greater expectation for Councillors to actively engage with constituents through multiple channels, including social media, public meetings, and informal contacts.
- Councillors must navigate complex policy environments and legal frameworks, often balancing competing interests and making difficult decisions.
- With the rise of digital communication and social media, Councillors often feel pressure to be constantly available to respond quickly to constituents' concerns.

In addition, many Councillors juggle their Council responsibilities alongside full-time jobs, family, and personal commitments.

The complexities of the social, governance and political landscapes in which the Council operates require significant levels of knowledge, understanding, preparation and participation from Members to ensure that York is able to serve its electorate well and represent the Borough across local sub- regional, regional and national partnerships.

**After considering the information presented, the political groups were unable to reach a consensus on a single submission, although they were agreed that the overall number of councillors should be an odd number. The following sections outline the individual submissions provided by each group.**

### **i. Labour (Majority) Group Submission:**

Thank you for the opportunity to make representations to the Commission regarding the number of councillors for the City of York council area.

We would like to see the number of elected representatives for York set at 53. There are a number of factors influencing our choice of this number:

#### **Strong and effective governance**

City of York Council decided in 2011 to adopt a Leader and Cabinet model of government. We continue to believe that is the right choice for York, even more so with the increasingly complex and challenging circumstances we face. The Leader and Executive Member roles have proved responsive to the changing challenges the authority has faced and the differing needs of the various communities we serve and provide political accountability, while minimising costs of administration.

Following a peer review of the Council and on-going cross party work a major effort is being made to deliver genuine cross-party scrutiny that adds real value to the Council's work. The revised arrangements will increase pre-scrutiny of key decisions and policy development. An increased number of Task & Finish Groups will support this work, which will be very reliant on their members to do the bulk of the work given the extremely limited officer resource (one scrutiny officer).

The Audit and Governance committee is also now a much stronger and probing committee in terms of holding the Council to account in regard to effective, efficient and legal operation, delivery and governance.

These and other changes in the workings of local authorities, not least the now reduced and therefore incredibly stretched officer resource, have imposed extra duties and demands on many councillors and more demands on their ability to manage effectively. It is important that the city has a sufficient body of councillors with the necessary time to enable all this work to be undertaken.

#### **The council as partner**

The City of York Council has long had a large number of both strategic and more local partnerships with its communities, businesses, public and voluntary sectors. With the constraint on resources, these relationships are now even more vital. Many significant matters are discussed and decided outside the council chamber and have an impact on employment, health and welfare of its citizens. For these partnerships to function well, the role of a councillor extends well beyond simply turning up at formal partnership meetings. Building relationships with partners in a wide variety of other forums and one to one is a time consuming but essential process.

It is also worth bearing in mind that York's geographical position between West and North Yorkshire means that it is important economic player in two distinct regions. Having long been an associate member of West Yorkshire Combined Authority, York is now part of the newly established York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, requiring significant time commitments not only for the Leader and Executive, but for those other councillors at the scrutiny and audit & governance committee level.

For York to ensure it maximises the opportunities of CA memberships, including the financial imperatives, these time commitments are crucial.

City of York is also represented by Councillors on a wide range of other more local outside bodies ensuring good links with local citizens and organisations that support York's social, cultural and environmental fabric. More informal links to community bodies, both more traditional residents and community associations, or, given the cost-of-living crisis, to newer organisations like foodbanks and other community or self-help groups that have grown significantly in the many less affluent parts or pockets of the city.

### **Representing our communities**

City of York is a complex and growing city, welcoming 9 million tourists and home to over 30,000 full time students as well as our other residents and electors. It is also a very diverse city. As well as the historic centre and other conservation areas, it includes rural communities, small villages, larger outlying communities, classic post-war housing estates, student flats and HMOs, and a more recent explosion of Airbnb accommodation bringing new local challenges. It has also seen an influx over the years of older more affluent people, many from London and the South-east matched by a loss of working / family age population.

The adult population in York is also significantly larger than the registered electorate – some of this is due to ineligibility to vote, but a substantial part is for other reasons including the transient nature of parts of the local populations and under registration in areas of deprivation – so councillors in those areas have disproportionate numbers of residents to represent and deal with. Some of those areas also have significant issues of anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol problems, poor housing all generating substantial community engagement needs including the need to work closely with the police and other agencies. Equally, more affluent actively engaged residents generate significant e-mail and other calls on councillor time in other particular areas. The challenges small businesses face and the significantly larger number of independent traders we now have has also brought, though obviously welcome, an increased level of engagement and time commitment.

It is vital that the population of York has sufficient numbers of local representatives to make sure that all voices are heard in the running of such an important body, but equally that those representatives have realistic size of population and related workloads to do a good job and capably represent them. Tight councillor numbers can leave councillors overloaded and struggling. Representational work includes casework on behalf of individual residents - whether electors or not, campaigning on behalf of groups of residents, liaising with local organisations, business and voluntary groups and attendance at local meetings including ward committees.

It is also worth bearing in mind that the arrival of social media on top of e-mail has imposed more demands on local councillors. There is a much more intense level of scrutiny from local websites, blogs, Facebook & other newer social media. The now extremely widespread use of digital channels often comes with expectations of instant responses to problems raised by constituents. Ignoring this media can close off a communication line to a large part of a councillor's electorate.

As a result of 14 years of local government funding reductions, which have resulted in the council rightly prioritising frontline delivery of services to residents in the city,

officer support to councillors is now extremely stretched. This has imposed extra duties and demands on councillors including on their ability to manage their roles effectively.

The recent final adoption of a Local Plan, the steady flow of significant housing applications and additional government funding for social housing should increase the already rising trend of new housing construction in the city over the last few years. We consider the conservatively calculated 2031 housing projections could well be an underestimate and the population / electorate growth higher than the Council's predictions – the Local plan allocations and the need to address the backlog of new housing will likely also see substantial further growth in the years immediately following the Commission's 2031 reference year date. If it's accepted that we want representation that allows our representatives to have lives outside of their councillor roles, then the projected population increase justifies an increase in the number of those representatives.

Whilst we are very aware that comparative statistics are not sufficient reason alone to justify any particular number of councillors, we consider that York is "under-represented" democratically already. The average size of electorate per Councillor in our CIPFA comparator unitary councils is just under 3000, while for York it's 3321.

Our proposal for 53 councillors in the 2031 reference year would mean 3,208 electors per councillor, still a long way above both the CIPFA comparator and all Unitary District averages but reflecting we think a reasonable balance between efficiency and cost and the delivery of effective democracy for the people of our city. It should also ensure an appropriate balance of representation between the urban, suburban, villages and rural communities which all make up the local authority area.

## **Conclusion**

Democracy is vital to a free society. In order for it to be meaningful it has to balance the demands of the public with the cost the public are expected to pay for it. We have endeavoured to be balanced and flexible in our approach to this submission and to assess the risks of alternative options. We believe there is a clear need to accommodate additional elector numbers in order to ensure voter expectations can also be met in a reasonable way. Not increasing the number of councillors would stretch that representational role and certainly diminish councillors' capacity to deal with other aspects of the council's role.

Democracy works best when all communities are represented within it. A smaller number than 53 would diminish the ability of councillors to represent their communities (not just their electors) or to exercise democratic control of the city. Democracy cannot be the sole preserve of people who do not need to work or who have retired. We believe the risk of a smaller council pro rata, with the additional burden this would place on elected members would deprive the authority of the insights from younger, working people who already struggle to juggle work, family and councillor responsibilities. We know many people are interested, but turn away from standing for election for this very reason.

Our recommendation will enable us to reflect the diverse range of communities and needs in our city, to have councillors who can fulfil their roles as community representatives, and to ensure we have an effective administration, good

governance and partnership working with appropriate levels of challenge and scrutiny.

We ask the commission to recommend a 53 member size for the future City of York Council.

## **ii. Liberal Democrat Group Submission:**

### **Introduction**

The Liberal Democrat Group on City of York Council is clear in its position: the number of councillors should remain at 47.

We broadly agree with the overall thrust of the council's draft report that councillor workload is high and increasing. However, we have not seen compelling evidence that the level of change justifies enlarging the council and the resulting increase in the cost of running it. The Liberal Democrat Group's position, therefore, is that the number of councillors should remain at 47.

### **Electorate Growth and Ratios**

We acknowledge that York's electorate is forecast to increase over the review period, which equates to approximately 400 additional voters per councillor by 2031. This modest increase will not make York an outlier when compared with our comparator group of similar unitary authorities.

The Boundary Commission's framework often considers electorate-to-councillor ratios as an indicator of representation. In 2012, York's average was around 3,200 electors per councillor, which was then considered "manageable" and comparable with Milton Keynes and Bath & North-East Somerset

By 2031, the figure will rise to about 3,500–3,600 electors per councillor. This remains a sustainable ratio that does not in itself justify more councillors.

### **Governance Arrangements and Capacity**

We have seen no evidence that York currently lacks the capacity to fulfil the duties required to run the Council and to provide a fair spread of representation across communities. Our view is that 47 is the minimum required.

York's fine political balance is a key feature of its governance. The administration has often been formed by a group of only slightly more than half the council. Reducing the number of councillors would likely result in administrations attempting to run the council with just 18–22 councillors. In such circumstances, over half of the group would need to serve on the Executive or chair committees, leaving very limited capacity for backbench scrutiny and undermining effective governance.

Equally, we see no case for increasing councillor numbers. Recent governance changes have streamlined formal commitments:

- The number of scrutiny committees has been reduced from four to three.
- The Planning function has been consolidated into one committee, down from two.

Whilst councillor casework has become more time-consuming, this is due largely to the abolition of the Members' Inquiry Team, which had provided support for managing resident queries. That was a political choice, and its effects should be addressed through officer support, not through structural expansion of the Council.

## **Representation and Community Identity**

York is characterised by cohesive village communities as well as urban wards. The current council size of 47 allows these communities to be represented effectively.

Increasing the size of the Council would jeopardise this balance. For example:

- Copmanthorpe is a single polling district and a single community, currently represented by one councillor.
- Under a council size of 50 or more, Copmanthorpe would fall outside the 10% tolerance. This would require either merging the village with neighbouring areas that do not share the same identity, or splitting the community in two.

Both outcomes would damage representation and increase councillor workload by creating overlapping responsibilities across ward boundaries. Retaining 47 councillors ensures that villages like Copmanthorpe continue to be represented by a single councillor with a clear focus on their issues.

## **The Role of Councillors**

The 2012 Liberal Democrat and Green submission described the role of a councillor as:

- Representing ward interests and giving a voice to all sectors of the community.
- Acting as a channel of communication on council policies and services.
- Undertaking casework for individual residents and organisations.
- Promoting equality, tolerance, and local democracy.
- Encouraging community participation in decision-making.
- Carrying out quasi-judicial duties on planning, licensing, and appeals.
- Representing the council on outside bodies and partnerships.

This description remains accurate. Councillors' duties have not changed in essence, though the scale of communication has grown due to digital channels. Email and social media allow residents to reach councillors more easily, but this reflects modern expectations and should be managed through better support structures. Adding councillors does not change the nature of the work, it simply increases the cost to taxpayers.

## **Diversity and Workload**

We agree that workloads must remain manageable to attract candidates from a wide range of backgrounds. Excessive demands can deter younger people, parents, those in work, or under-represented communities from standing.

However, in York there is already a mechanism to address workload pressures: the Independent Remuneration Panel. This body sets councillor allowances with regard to workload. Should workloads increase further in future, the remuneration system

provides a fair and proportionate way to reflect that. Expanding the Council is not the appropriate response.

### **Costs and Value for Money**

Adding six extra councillors, as has been suggested, would add around £250,000 in allowances and associated costs over a Council term. At a time when the Council faces major financial pressures, this would not represent value for money. That funding could instead be invested in frontline services or in officer support for councillors, such as re-establishing the Members' Inquiry Team.

### **Conclusion**

We broadly agree with the analysis that councillor workloads are high and rising. However, we have not seen compelling evidence that this justifies enlarging the Council.

- The forecast increase in electorate, around 400 additional voters per councillor, keeps York within the norms of comparator authorities.
- The current size of 47 councillors provides enough capacity for governance and scrutiny. Reducing numbers would risk hollowing out scrutiny capacity; increasing numbers would risk community splits and add unnecessary costs.
- Casework challenges should be addressed through officer support and remuneration, not structural expansion.

For these reasons, the Liberal Democrat Group strongly believes that 47 councillors remains the appropriate size for the City of York Council.

### **iii. Conservative Group Submission:**

The group is pleased to give its views on the number of councillors there should be in York and in accordance with the process will in due course give its views on boundaries and single and multi member wards at the second stage of the process.

We believe there is a broad consensus on issues like wanting a broader range of people to be councillors and as part of that not having an overly high workload. However being a councillor is something of a unique role and with the honour and privilege of the role comes responsibility and time commitment.

York is a relatively well off city and fortunately, in aggregate, does not face the issues of many other areas. It is in generally a nice middle ground of not having the issues of a big city and also not having the travel time issues of a more rural area. The Combined Authority has added some committee meetings to councillor diaries but is also shifting some responsibilities away from the council. We also note the removal of a York Planning Committee and reductions in the number and size of Scrutiny Committees which will reduce councillor workload. Although opinions on the merits of the Cabinet / Executive model vary there seems no prospect of York moving away from it and this system reduces the workload on the average councillor – it increases the workload of Cabinet / Executive members but given their allowances equate to a minimum of £33,000 that is surely sufficient to justify the job defaulting as a full time role rather than being considered as the core of the majority of councillors.

We believe the population of York will continue to increase, including as the Local Plan housing sites are developed – although the pace of these is hard to predict. We also note the high student numbers and in some wards the exceptionally high levels of adults not registered to vote as against those registered to vote as well as the often higher impact that businesses or particular facilities (such as a heritage site or waste centre) may have. However anything on councillor numbers must clearly be based on averages.

We note some comments in the councillor survey saying that being a councillor is more work than they expected but would question whether, even in an anonymous survey, human nature would see people admit such a role was easier than they thought. In our experience the time commitment of being a councillor is not a notable barrier to those that want to do it anymore than people with work and families etc have inevitable time struggles, factors like the ability to truly make a difference or not and the way people work together more often are.

With many residents finding things tougher than ever we need to limit the cost of politics, however in York councillor allowances (and especially 'Special Responsibility Allowances') have increased significantly in recent years. We therefore believe we need to cut the number of councillors and suggest a figure of 41, which would still keep an odd number. We note a number of examples nationally of councillor numbers being reduced and our neighbours North Yorkshire where the average number of residents is higher per councillor and geographies are much wider; yet it is a well functioning council.

#### **iv. Submission from Cllr Mark Warters:**

Council size - Task & Finish Group.

It is concerning that the start of what will, if it follows the pattern of the last Local Government Boundary Commission of England (LGBCE) Electoral Review into City of York Council (CYC), be little more than an exercise in political gerrymandering run for the benefit of the political groupings on CYC is to start by keeping public involvement at arms length.

Why isn't there full and open public involvement of this - Council size - the most meaningful part of the process?

Why the need for a separate group of councillors to gather and no doubt sanitise public views before council members decide on a recommendation as to council size?

The LGBCE ought to be conducting the review of Council size in the same way as the rest of the review by fully disseminating information to the York public, Parish Councils and Residents Groups and inviting views on CYC size.

The views of political parties and politicians currently elected will of course be clouded by a degree of 'self-preservation' that will not be conducive to deciding upon Council size with proper objectivity.

How likely are the political parties going to be to advocate a decisive reduction in Council size to reflect current governance arrangements (which have changed on the regional level significantly since the last review) if such a reduction that is long overdue to reflect local financial circumstances would involve reducing numbers of politicians?

If the starting point of this Electoral Review is from such a position of political self interest then how can the process be deemed to have any real value?

This Electoral Review ought to offer real opportunity for change and a significant reduction in cost for York council taxpayers, but will this opportunity be taken?

Since the last Electoral Review in York CYC have along with North Yorkshire Council (NYC) agreed to the formation of another hugely expensive bureaucracy - the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority with the elected Mayor.

This system has to date created a significant overlap of responsibilities and function with CYC and NYC so it is only right and proper to seriously consider why CYC and NYC need such large numbers of councillors, a reduction in councillors to rebalance the cost burden of 'democracy' to the council taxpayer needs to be considered.

A significant reduction in council member size to reflect changed responsibilities would of course open the door to a reduction in senior staffer levels at both CYC and NYC not just in terms of governance but across all functions where responsibilities overlap with the Combined Authority (CA).

Just recently the CYC Director of Governance (DOG) was clear in a response to me that it was considered that CYC had no role to play in Community Safety and Policing with such responsibilities now with the CA and Mayor, just one small

example<sup>1</sup>.

Since the last LGBCE review in York there has been much talk of returning CYC to a 'Committee System' of governance from the ongoing, expensive failure of the 'Executive' system (elected dictator system) but unfortunately that is all there has ever been - talk!

In opposition political parties talk about wanting to bring in a modern committee system but whichever party takes control of the Council at election power is then concentrated within a small 'Executive' with of course allowances to match, currently 8 members effectively sidelining the other 39 members for the full four year electoral cycle.

A glance over the other CYC Committees sees how the other roles are divided up but how many of these committees and roles are needed? How many are just talking shops that if the whole Council was organised along the lines of a committee system could see a reduction in the numbers of councillors needed with those on such a system making meaningful contributions?

There will shortly be pressure from Government to reduce the role of Councillors in the planning process with the likelihood that many applications going in front of planning committees will no longer do so, a clear reduction in role for councillors.

As for Scrutiny Committees there would be no need for such committees under the modern committee system of governance as I stated to the recent scrutiny review, another compelling reason to look at reduction of CYC Council size.

There are plenty of reasons to advocate for a meaningful reduction in Council size in York leaving aside those above, the front line functionality of this and of course all other Local Authorities is much reduced, the effects of which are very noticeable to the people of York.

Shouldn't the size of the Council membership be reduced to reflect that new reality?

Shouldn't the question of reducing the size and cost of maintaining a huge political councillor system be put to the people who actually fund this? Questions asked directly by the LGBCE to the public rather than an 'arms length' CYC 'consultation' via a council grouping with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo?

I will be strongly advocating that CYC sets an example for the rest of the country and puts forward a significant reduction in Council membership to reflect the reduction in duties it has and services it provides - a sensible figure would seem to be 25.

Perhaps then with a committee system of governance there might be the opportunity for sensible and effective working which has clearly not been evident for many years under the current system.

This LGBCE review provides another opportunity for a sea change in direction

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<sup>1</sup> Note: in relation to the petition referred to above, the advice which was provided was that the petitioners would be better off petitioning the Combined Authority (which actually has the policing function) rather than CYC. ... as they acknowledge themselves, much of this is outside [CYC's] control, and therefore the petition should be directed to the combined authority, for the attention of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime.

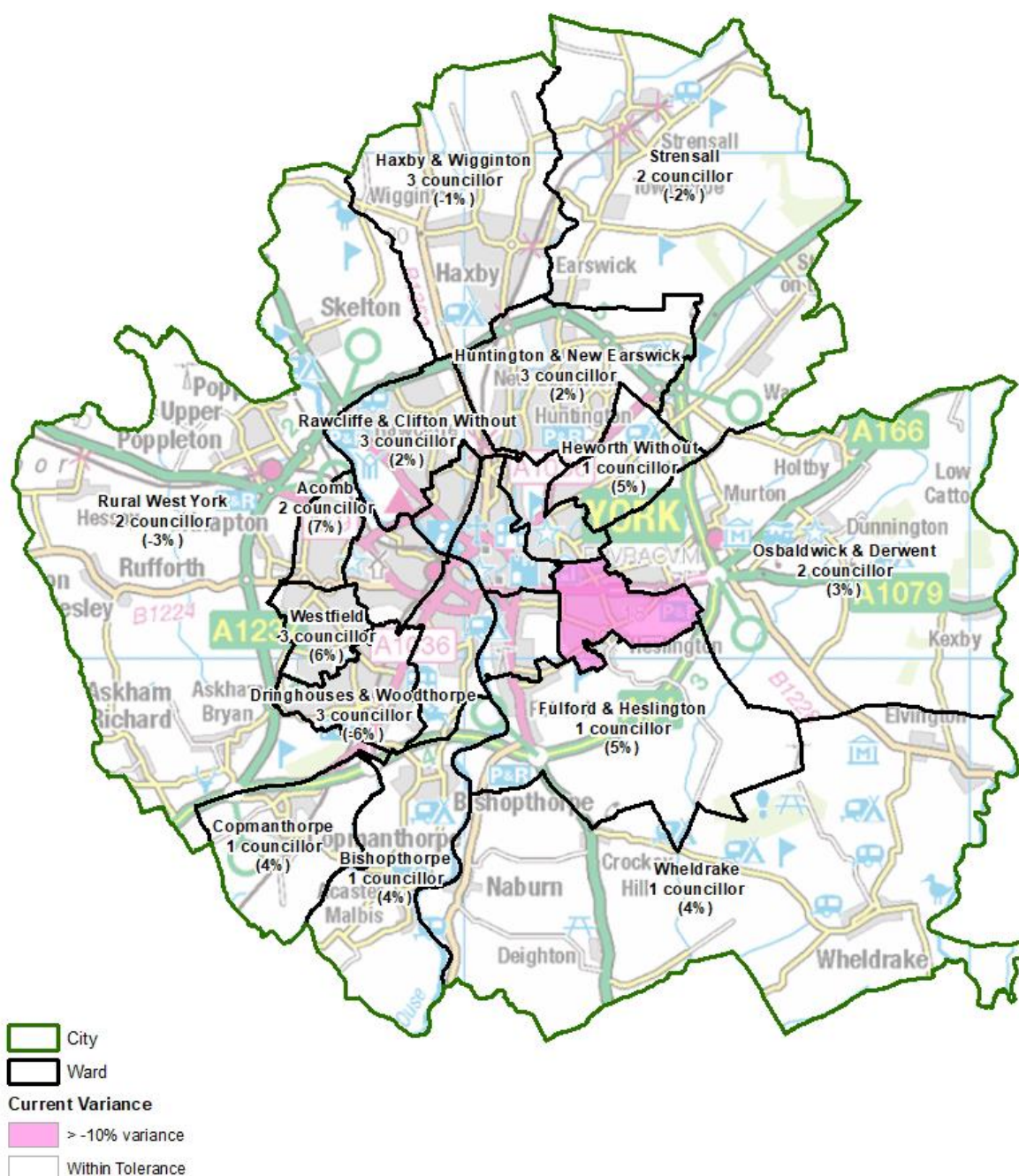
of CYC, will that opportunity be taken?

I think most know the answer.

As a related matter - just what has happened to the 'Community Governance Review' here in York? it seems to be years out of time and without the review of Parish Boundaries and indeed the requests to create new Parish/Town Councils will cause a good degree of confusion should the LGBCE review tinker with Ward Boundaries across Parish Boundaries.

## Map of Electoral Variances (Boundary Commission Report)

York City Council: Existing wards by variance  
Based on December 2023 ONS electoral data



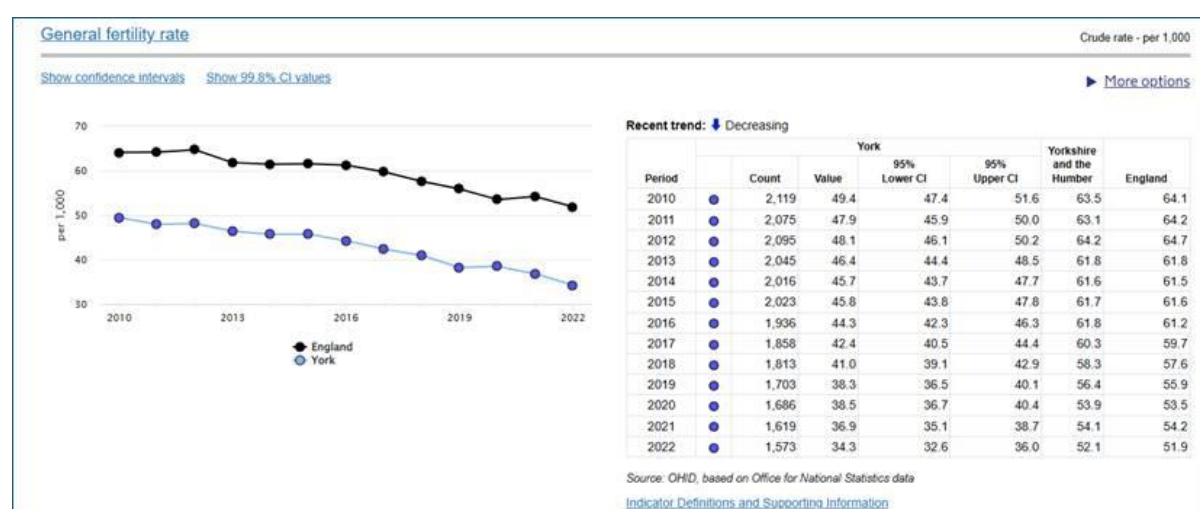
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## Births and Deaths

Charts to show that

- the fertility rate and the number of actual births in York is falling,
- Most of our statistical neighbours have a declining fertility rate
- Our closest statistical neighbours also have low fertility rates
- the mortality rate in York is fairly stable but the number of deaths is gradually rising
- All but one of our statistical neighbours have stable mortality rates

This chart shows that the General Fertility Rate in York is falling and is lower than the England average.



This chart shows that York has a significantly lower fertility rate than the England average and the second lowest fertility rate amongst our group of statistical neighbours. 13 out of 16 in the group have a recent declining trend in fertility rate. Of the 4 closest statistical neighbours to York, Bath and North East Somerset (1); Brighton and Hove (4), Oxfordshire (3) and Cambridgeshire (5) also have fertility rates which are significantly lower than the England average while South Gloucestershire (2) has a similar rate compared with the England average.

Areas **York and neighbours** All in England

Show 99.8% CI values

Area ▲▼	Recent Trend	Neighbour Rank ▲▼	Count ▲▼	Value ▲▼	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	↓	-	577,046	51.9		51.8 52.0
Neighbours average	-	-	-	-		-
Surrey	↓	7	11,740	52.9		52.0 53.9
Warwickshire	↓	11	5,757	52.5		51.1 53.9
Stockton-on-Tees	↓	12	1,901	52.4		50.1 54.8
South Gloucestershire	↓	2	2,925	51.4		49.5 53.3
Leicestershire	↓	8	6,603	51.1		49.8 52.3
Warrington	↓	13	1,914	50.9		48.6 53.2
Cheshire West and Chester	→	6	3,219	50.0		48.2 51.7
Windsor and Maidenhead	→	9	1,356	49.5		46.9 52.2
Oxfordshire	↓	3	7,201	49.1		48.0 50.3
Cambridgeshire	↓	5	6,395	47.6		46.4 48.8
Leeds	↓	15	8,617	47.0		46.0 48.0
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	↓	10	3,332	43.4		41.9 44.9
Bristol	↓	14	5,048	41.7		40.6 42.9
Bath and North East Somerset	→	1	1,633	40.3		38.4 42.3
York	↓	-	1,573	34.3		32.6 36.0
Brighton and Hove	↓	4	2,099	32.2		30.9 33.6

Source: OHID, based on Office for National Statistics data

Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information

The chart below shows that whilst the number of deaths in York have risen over the last 23 years the mortality **rate** fell between 2001 and 2009 and has remained fairly stable since.



All but one of Yorks statistical neighbours have stable mortality rates

Area ▲▼	Recent Trend	Neighbour Rank ▲▼	Count ▲▼	Value ▲▼		95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	↗	-	544,054	964	<div></div>	962	967
Neighbours average	—	-	-	-		-	-
Stockton-on-Tees	↗	12	2,015	1,043	<div></div>	997	1,090
Warrington	↗	13	2,207	1,028	<div></div>	985	1,072
Bristol	↗	14	3,413	1,016	<div></div>	982	1,051
Leeds	↓	15	7,003	1,014	<div></div>	991	1,039
Brighton and Hove	↗	4	2,149	978	<div></div>	937	1,021
Cheshire West and Chester	↗	6	3,936	974	<div></div>	944	1,005
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	↗	10	4,618	948	<div></div>	920	976
Warwickshire	↗	11	6,331	945	<div></div>	922	969
Leicestershire	↗	8	7,191	914	<div></div>	893	935
York	↗	-	1,953	911	<div></div>	870	952
Cambridgeshire	↗	5	6,086	872	<div></div>	850	894
Bath and North East Somerset	↗	1	1,813	868	<div></div>	829	909
South Gloucestershire	↗	2	2,637	866	<div></div>	833	900
Windsor and Maidenhead	↗	9	1,381	838	<div></div>	794	884
Oxfordshire	↗	3	6,241	836	<div></div>	816	857
Surrey	↗	7	10,995	817	<div></div>	802	833

Source: OHID, based on Office for National Statistics data

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)

**Links to relevant sections of the Council Constitution:**

**Executive Forward Plan:**

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=733&RD=0&bcr=1>

**Scheme of Delegation:**

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s184981/01%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Scheme%20of%20Delegation.pdf>

**Public Participation Protocol:**

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s184988/08%20-%20Appendix%208%20-%20Public%20Participation%20Protocol.pdf>

## **Appendix 4**

A comprehensive breakdown of ward profiles can be accessed by using the following link:<https://data.yorkopendata.org/dataset/york-ward-profiles-2022-23>