

To consider the following Motions on Notice under Standing Order B10:

### **1) Protecting York's Independent Patient Voice – Healthwatch**

**To be moved by Councillor Steels-Walshaw**

#### **Council notes:**

- That Healthwatch York has for over a decade provided an independent and trusted route for residents to share their experiences of health and social care, particularly for people who feel unable to raise concerns directly with service providers;
- That this independence enables and supports transparency, learning and improvement across the health and social care system;
- National proposals within the NHS 10-Year Plan and the Penny Dash Review would bring statutory Healthwatch functions into a new Patient Experience Directorate within the Department of Health and Social Care, with local voice functions embedded within NHS bodies and local authorities;
- That these proposals require primary legislation, and local Healthwatch services will continue to operate until any such legislation is enacted;
- A wide range of national organisations, including respected health policy bodies, have highlighted the importance of maintaining strong, independent mechanisms for the service user's voice to be heard.

#### **Council recognises:**

- The value of an independent voice in supporting residents to speak openly about their experiences, including those in vulnerable circumstances;
- The contribution Healthwatch York makes to local insight, system learning, and partnership working across health and social care in the city;
- The importance of ensuring that any future arrangements continue to provide a clear, accessible and independent mechanism for people to share their views and experiences.

**Council resolves** to express its strong support and appreciation for Healthwatch York for representing the views of service users locally for

over a decade, and for the work of York's Health and Care Partnership Executive Committee in continuing to promote the importance of Healthwatch's work, including keeping this independent function within the York health system.

**Council further resolves to:**

- Request the Council Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care requesting a review of the proposed legislative changes, to ensure that any future model continues to provide a robust, truly independent and trusted mechanism for representing patient and public voices; and
- Request the Executive Member for Health and Adult Social Care, including as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, works constructively with local partners, including the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, local MPs and voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as York's Health and Care Partnership, to promote and protect independent advocacy for York residents.

**Amendment by the Liberal Democrat Group, to be proposed by Cllr Runciman**

**In the "Council notes" section, after the final bullet point, insert:**

1. That The King's Fund has warned that the decision to abolish Healthwatch was taken "without a comprehensive review" of the patient feedback landscape, and that the implications for the wider system of patient voice and experience were "not fully explored";
2. That the King's Fund has noted "Recent high-profile failures where people's voices were ignored or marginalised, including maternity care scandals (Department of Health and Social Care 2025c), underline that the conditions that led to the creation of Healthwatch have not disappeared."
3. That the Health Secretary is incorrect to state that "we don't need ventriloquists to speak for patients, patients can speak for ourselves if we're given the opportunity to do it." Such views risk excluding some of the more marginalised voices that Healthwatch work so hard to engage and fail to acknowledge what happens when voices are ignored.

4. Concerns expressed nationally that absorbing patient voice functions into NHS bodies and local authorities risks undermining the independence necessary for patients to speak freely and without fear or favour;

**In the “Council resolves” section, after “Council further resolves to:”, insert:**

1. Commit that any future arrangements to replace or replicate the functions of Healthwatch must be delivered by an independent body, separate from the Council, NHS providers, and commissioners;

For information, the effect of the amendment on the above motion, with changes highlighted in bold:

**Council notes:**

- That Healthwatch York has for over a decade provided an independent and trusted route for residents to share their experiences of health and social care, particularly for people who feel unable to raise concerns directly with service providers;
- That this independence enables and supports transparency, learning and improvement across the health and social care system;
- National proposals within the NHS 10-Year Plan and the Penny Dash Review would bring statutory Healthwatch functions into a new Patient Experience Directorate within the Department of Health and Social Care, with local voice functions embedded within NHS bodies and local authorities;
- That these proposals require primary legislation, and local Healthwatch services will continue to operate until any such legislation is enacted;
- A wide range of national organisations, including respected health policy bodies, have highlighted the importance of maintaining strong, independent mechanisms for the service user’s voice to be heard.
- **That the King's Fund has warned that the decision to abolish Healthwatch was taken “without a comprehensive review” of the patient feedback landscape, and that the implications for the wider system of patient voice and experience were “not fully explored”;**

- That the King’s Fund has noted “Recent high-profile failures where people’s voices were ignored or marginalised, including maternity care scandals (Department of Health and Social Care 2025c), underline that the conditions that led to the creation of Healthwatch have not disappeared.”
- That the Health Secretary is incorrect to state that “we don’t need ventriloquists to speak for patients, patients can speak for ourselves if we’re given the opportunity to do it.” Such views risk excluding some of the more marginalised voices that Healthwatch work so hard to engage and fail to acknowledge what happens when voices are ignored.
- Concerns expressed nationally that absorbing patient voice functions into NHS bodies and local authorities risks undermining the independence necessary for patients to speak freely and without fear or favour;

**Council recognises:**

- The value of an independent voice in supporting residents to speak openly about their experiences, including those in vulnerable circumstances;
- The contribution Healthwatch York makes to local insight, system learning, and partnership working across health and social care in the city;
- The importance of ensuring that any future arrangements continue to provide a clear, accessible and independent mechanism for people to share their views and experiences.

**Council resolves** to express its strong support and appreciation for Healthwatch York for representing the views of service users locally for over a decade, and for the work of York’s Health and Care Partnership Executive Committee in continuing to promote the importance of Healthwatch’s work, including keeping this independent function within the York health system.

**Council further resolves to:**

- Request the Council Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care requesting a review of the proposed legislative changes, to ensure that any future model continues to

- provide a robust, truly independent and trusted mechanism for representing patient and public voices; and
2. Request the Executive Member for Health and Adult Social Care, including as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, works constructively with local partners, including the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, local MPs and voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as York's Health and Care Partnership, to promote and protect independent advocacy for York residents.
  3. **Commit that any future arrangements to replace or replicate the functions of Healthwatch must be delivered by an independent body, separate from the Council, NHS providers, and commissioners.**

### **3) Impact of Business Rates Revaluation**

**To be moved by Councillor Healey**

#### **Council notes:**

- The revaluation of commercial properties for business rates due to take effect on 1 April 2026.
- Early draft valuations indicate significant increases in rateable values for many businesses across York.
- Analysis by industry bodies suggests hospitality businesses could face average increases of over £32,000 in business rates over the next three years.
- Small hospitality businesses alone are expected to face £318 million in additional business rate costs nationally.
- These increases come at a time when many businesses in York are already facing rising costs from National Insurance increases, higher energy bills and supply chain pressures.
- Businesses that form the backbone of York's local communities, including pubs, cafés, pharmacies, childcare providers, veterinary practices and independent retailers are particularly exposed.
- Some businesses in York may lose eligibility for Small Business Rates Relief, creating sudden increases in liabilities.

### **Council believes:**

- The current business rates system places a disproportionate burden on bricks-and-mortar businesses.
- Property-based taxation risks penalising businesses in York which provide local jobs and community services and help create vibrant local high streets, while online competitors face far lower costs.
- Sudden increases in rate liabilities are likely to have an adverse impact on York's high streets and increase the risk of business closures.

### **Council resolves:**

- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Government to request that it reconsider the implementation of the 2026 business rates revaluation where it results in significant increases in liabilities for businesses.
- To request that officers consider what advice and support the council, working with partners in the business community, can offer to York businesses losing Small Business Rates Relief or facing significant increases.
- To ask the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing York's concerns about the impact of business rate increases on local businesses and high streets.
- To ask the Executive to work with the Combined Authority Mayor to make Government aware of the problem faced by many small businesses who would like to expand in order to help cover higher business rates payments, but in doing so risk breaching the current VAT threshold which could make their business unviable.

### **Amendment by the Labour Group, to be proposed by Cllr Whitcroft**

### **Council notes:**

- The revaluation of commercial properties for business rates due to take effect on 1 April 2026.
- Early draft valuations indicate ~~DELETE~~ significant (ADD) a range of falls and increases in rateable values for many businesses across York.
- Analysis by industry bodies suggests hospitality businesses could face average increases of over £32,000 in business rates over the

next three years, (ADD) a figure estimated before the Government made amendments in January to the new business rates system launching in April.

- (ADD) Changes to the business rates system are in part due to the ending of temporary Covid-era support.
- Small hospitality businesses alone (DELETE) ~~are expected~~ (ADD) were estimated to face £318 million in additional business rate costs nationally (ADD) over a three-year period, until the Government listened to feedback and announced an additional 15% in relief for pubs and live music venues, on top of other relief, to reduce their liabilities over the same three-year period.
- These increases come at a time when many businesses in York are already facing rising costs from National Insurance increases, higher energy bills and supply chain pressures.
- Businesses that form the backbone of York's local communities, including pubs, cafés, pharmacies, childcare providers, veterinary practices and independent retailers are particularly exposed.
- (ADD) The Government's forthcoming High Streets Strategy, and the positive contribution to York's High Streets through the Mayor's **Vibrant and Sustainable High Street Fund, which is providing important investment in York, including in Stonegate, Haxby and Wigginton and Walmgate.**
- Some businesses in York may lose eligibility for Small Business Rates Relief, creating sudden increases in liabilities, (ADD) however the replacement Supporting Small Business Relief will provide relief on bills for eligible businesses, capping increases at no more than £800 per year.
- (ADD) The Labour Government's recognition of the financial challenges facing the economy after 14 years of austerity, led by Liberal Democrats and Conservatives in Government, and following international economic shocks, as well as its efforts to rebuild our high streets through its High Street Review, alongside addressing funding challenges in the hospitality sector.
- The work of the Labour MP for York Central with York BID, Indie York, York High Street Forum as well as businesses throughout the city with the aim of ensuring the success of York's high street is maintained, and through the Treasury and in Parliament in making the case for support for York businesses.

**Council believes:**

- The current business rates system places a disproportionate burden on bricks-and-mortar businesses.
- Property-based taxation risks penalising businesses in York which provide local jobs and community services and help create vibrant local high streets, while online competitors face far lower costs.
- Sudden increases in rate liabilities, (ADD) if not cushioned through the Government's transitional support, are likely to have an adverse impact on York's (ADD) well performing high streets and increase the risk of business closures.

### **Council resolves:**

- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Government to request that it reconsider the implementation of the 2026 business rates revaluation where it results in (ADD) sudden and significant increases in liabilities for (ADD) SME businesses.
- To request that officers consider what advice and support the council, working with partners in the business community, can offer to York businesses losing Small Business Rates Relief or facing (ADD) sudden and significant increases, (ADD) should there be cases where those businesses won't be in receipt of the replacement Supporting Small Business Relief, or transitional relief to cushion this change.
- To ask the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing York's concerns about the impact of (ADD) sudden and significant business rate increases on (ADD) SME local businesses and high streets, (ADD) and to include local examples in its forthcoming High Streets Strategy to highlight York's success.
- To ask the Executive to work with the Combined Authority Mayor to make Government aware of the problem faced by many small businesses who would like to expand but (ADD) face challenges doing so due to the VAT threshold acting as a disincentive. (DELETE) ~~in order to help cover higher business rates payments, in doing so risk breaching the current VAT threshold which could make their business unviable~~
- (ADD) To call on the Government, through the requested Council Leader letter above, to review the entire business rates system to level the playing field between large multinational corporations and small businesses, and between online and bricks and mortar businesses.

### **Council notes:**

- The revaluation of commercial properties for business rates due to take effect on 1 April 2026.
- Early draft valuations indicate **a range of falls and** increases in rateable values for many businesses across York.
- Analysis by industry bodies suggests hospitality businesses could face average increases of over £32,000 in business rates over the next three years, **a figure estimated before the Government made amendments in January to the new business rates system launching in April.**
- **Changes to the business rates system are in part due to the ending of temporary Covid-era support.**
- Small hospitality businesses alone **were estimated** to face £318 million in additional business rate costs nationally **over a three-year period, until the Government listened to feedback and announced an additional 15% in relief for pubs and live music venues, on top of other relief, to reduce their liabilities over the same three-year period.**
- These increases come at a time when many businesses in York are already facing rising costs from National Insurance increases, higher energy bills and supply chain pressures.
- Businesses that form the backbone of York's local communities, including pubs, cafés, pharmacies, childcare providers, veterinary practices and independent retailers are particularly exposed.
- **The Government's forthcoming High Streets Strategy, and the positive contribution to York's High Streets through the Mayor's Vibrant and Sustainable High Street Fund, which is providing important investment in York, including in Stonegate, Haxby and Wigginton and Walmgate.**
- Some businesses in York may lose eligibility for Small Business Rates Relief, creating sudden increases in liabilities, **however the replacement Supporting Small Business Relief will provide relief on bills for eligible businesses, capping increases at no more than £800 per year.**
- **The Labour Government's recognition of the financial challenges facing the economy after 14 years of austerity, led by Liberal Democrats and Conservatives in Government, and following international economic shocks, as well as its efforts to rebuild our high streets through its High Street Review, alongside addressing funding challenges in the hospitality sector.**
- **The work of the Labour MP for York Central with York BID, Indie York, York High Street Forum as well as businesses throughout**

**the city with the aim of ensuring the success of York's high street is maintained, and through the Treasury and in Parliament in making the case for support for York businesses.**

**Council believes:**

- The current business rates system places a disproportionate burden on bricks-and-mortar businesses.
- Property-based taxation risks penalising businesses in York which provide local jobs and community services and help create vibrant local high streets, while online competitors face far lower costs.
- Sudden increases in rate liabilities, **if not cushioned through the Government's transitional support**, are likely to have an adverse impact on York's **well performing** high streets and increase the risk of business closures.

**Council resolves:**

- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Government to request that it reconsider the implementation of the 2026 business rates revaluation where it results in **sudden and** significant increases in liabilities for **SME** businesses.
- To request that officers consider what advice and support the council, working with partners in the business community, can offer to York businesses losing Small Business Rates Relief or facing **sudden and** significant increases, **should there be cases where those businesses won't be in receipt of the replacement Supporting Small Business Relief, or transitional relief to cushion this change.**
- To ask the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing York's concerns about the impact of **sudden and significant** business rate increases on **SME** local businesses and high streets, **and to include local examples in its forthcoming High Streets Strategy to highlight York's success.**
- To ask the Executive to work with the Combined Authority Mayor to make Government aware of the problem faced by many small businesses who would like to expand but **face challenges doing so due to the VAT threshold acting as a disincentive.**
- **To call on the Government, through the requested Council Leader letter above, to review the entire business rates system to level the playing field between large multinational**

**corporations and small businesses, and between online and bricks and mortar businesses.**