

Residents' Telephone Survey 2020

Report of Findings

Undertaken by



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1. Key Findings

- 1.1 When asked whether or not, prior to the interview respondents had heard about the possible changes to government in North Yorkshire, the majority of all respondents had not heard (54% 'no – have not heard', and a further 15% were 'not sure').
- 1.2 When asked to say how important or not they feel that each of five of the Council's reasons for remaining an independent Council were around three-quarters or more of all respondents were of the view that each of the five Council's reasons listed in the survey were 'very (5)' or 'fairly important (4)', and less than one-in-ten that any of the reasons were 'not at all (1)' or 'not very important (2)'.
 - A. City of York Council to remain an independent council to reflect York's history as a distinctive and unique place: 77% 'important (4 or 5)' / 8% 'not important (1 or 2)'
 - B. The City of York Council to remain an independent council to avoid tens of millions of pounds in reorganisation costs: 76% 'important (4 or 5)' / 6% 'not important (1 or 2)'
 - C. Avoiding disruption to existing partnership arrangements for example the working between the council and NHS in response to Covid-19: 78% 'important (4 or 5)' / 4% 'not important (1 or 2)'
 - D. Retaining low levels of Council Tax in York (by not subsidising the rural services which inevitably cost more to deliver): 73% 'important (4 or 5)' / 6% 'not important (1 or 2)'
 - E. Remaining an independent council, with locally accountable decision-making, to allow City of York Council to concentrate on the residents, communities and economy of York which is different to the coastal and rural: 76% 'important (4 or 5)' / 6% 'not important (1 or 2)'.
- 1.3 Reason C was the most positively viewed, and reason D the least positively viewed.
- 1.4 When presented with two possible options for the future of local government in the City of York more than two-thirds (70%) of all respondents said that they would prefer 'York to remain as an independent council and to work closely with a single new North Yorkshire council'. One-in-twelve (8%) overall said that they would prefer 'York to become part of a new council, with City of York Council merged with the current Scarborough, Selby and Ryedale Councils', and 22% did not know or were not sure.
- 1.5 Respondents' strength of feeling of belonging to the 'City of York' area was much higher than that to the 'Eastern part of North Yorkshire': the large majority (83%) of all respondents said that they feel a 'strong (score 5 or 4) connection to the 'City of York'. With regards to the 'Eastern part of North Yorkshire', less than a quarter (22%) feel a very or fairly strong connection (5 or 4).

- 1.6 When asked if there was anything else they'd like to say about the 'potential changes to local government in North Yorkshire', one-third (33%) of the total weighted sample offered comments. Comments relating to being 'against merging with the Eastern part of North Yorkshire/ prefer to stay the same' were the most mentioned.

2. Background and Introduction

- 2.1 City of York council together with other North Yorkshire councils have agreed to submit to Government proposals to help secure a devolution deal for York and North Yorkshire. The Council is of the view that devolution presents opportunities for the city and region, which could secure significant investment in York and the wider region over the next 30 years. The Government has said any York and North Yorkshire devolution deal requires local government to simplify by removing the complex two-tier (County and District) structure in other parts of North Yorkshire. The City of York is the only unitary council in the area whilst for the rest of North Yorkshire service delivery is split between the County Council and the 5 district and 2 borough councils.
- 2.2 Different models may be proposed by some district councils which involve merging York with neighbouring districts. Neighbouring authorities will propose the model that best represents their residents. The City of York council is of the opinion that there is no advantage in changing structures unnecessarily. Indeed their view is that changes could jeopardise a range of crucial services, create significant upheaval and uncertainty and reduce the impact York can make across the region.
- 2.3 The council has consulted and fed back the views of York's residents and businesses already collected in their submission to the government. During November additional feedback has been collected by City of York council which will be submitted to central government by 9th December. This document reports the results of a telephone survey with a randomised sample of York residents which took place between 24th and 30th November 2020.
- 2.4 The purpose of the survey was to:
- Ascertain if residents had heard of possible changes to local government and if they had the source(s) of this information
 - To provide information on two options currently being discussed
 - To present the preferred option of City of York council to respondents and seek their views on the importance or lack of importance of the reasons City of York has proposed this preferred option

- The preference of respondents regarding the two options
- Perceptions of belonging to City of York and East North Yorkshire
- Any other comments respondents wished to make.

2.5 The survey was undertaken by NWA Social and Market Research, a company established in 1989, which specialises in high quality research, evaluation and consultation for local authorities and other public sector clients. NWA is a 'Company Partner' with the Market Research Society and works fully within their ethical guidelines. Two members of senior staff are full members of the Market Research Society and all senior staff are professionally qualified to undertake research. NWA is registered under the Data Protection Act and ensures that research fully meets confidentiality and GDPR standards. The company has many years of experience of research undertaken on devolution and re-organisation issues.

3. Methodology

3.1 Contact details of residents living in the City of York, stratified by age, gender and electoral ward were sourced from a list provider (Sample Answers*). Interviews were undertaken from 9:30am to 9:00pm in order to generate a broadly representative sample of residents. A total of 504 interviews were successfully completed during the survey period, yielding a Confidence Interval of $\pm 4\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level for the overall achieved sample for a 'worst case scenario' 50%/50% response, (narrowing to 3% for a 10%/90% response). Results from the survey can therefore be generalised to the wider City of York population with a good degree of confidence.

(* The company Sample Answers has been supplying the Market Research industry for over twenty-five years; they are registered with the ICO and the samples they supply are derived by selecting from the GDPR-compliant data files they hold in-house.)

3.2 Copy of the survey questionnaire can be accessed by clicking on the link below:

<https://nwa.researchfeedback.net/s.asp?k=160569166532>

3.3 Respondents were informed that the purpose of the survey was to seek their views on potential changes to local government that could affect the residents of York. It was explained that the government is pushing forward with plans to simplify council structures across England as part of devolution, and has asked for proposals from existing councils in some areas on how best to achieve this.

- 3.4 Details of potential changes were explained to respondents by the interviewer reading out the following:

“Thinking about the possible changes, two proposals have been put forward, both resulting in two new councils across York and North Yorkshire.

The first, from City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council, would see the creation of a single North Yorkshire council replacing the current county and district councils that exist outside of York. City of York Council would remain as an independent council, with no changes to its boundaries or the services it delivers.

The second, from the North Yorkshire district councils would see the whole of North Yorkshire and York split into two councils – East and West. If this option were to go ahead York would become part of a new larger single council covering Scarborough, Ryedale and Selby districts.”

- 3.5 Responses from the questionnaire were coded and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences; a piece of statistical software) and tables of results produced by age and gender. Tables of results are attached as Appendix 1. Data was weighted at the analysis stage and details of the weighting applied is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.6 A final question where respondents could make further comments was included at the end of the questionnaire. Responses have been coded and included in the tables. Responses have also been shown verbatim in Appendix 3.

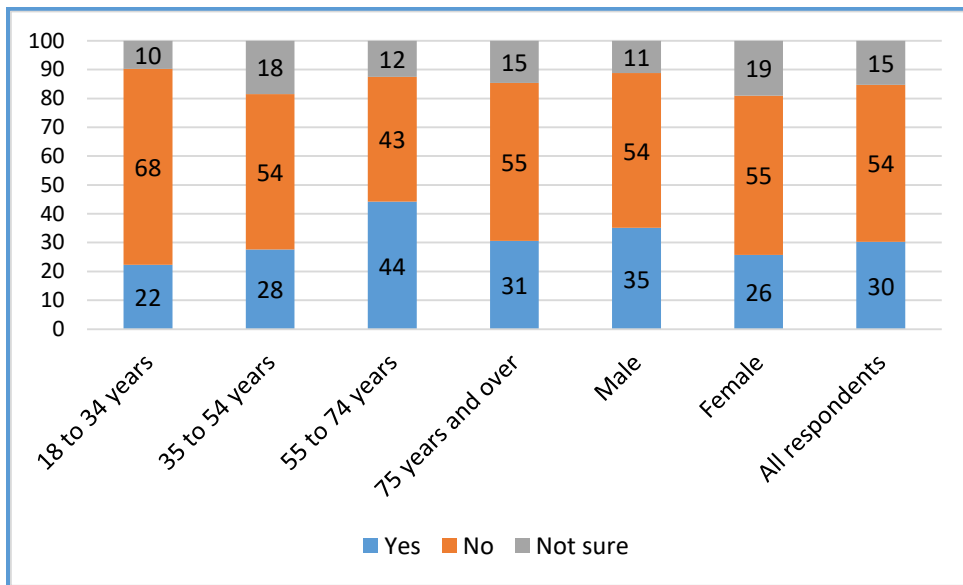
4. The Findings

4.1 Awareness of Possible Changes to Local Government in North Yorkshire

Q1 *Prior to me calling today had you heard about possible changes to local government in North Yorkshire? Q1a: Where did you hear about the possible changes?*

Respondents were first asked whether or not, prior to the interview, they had heard about the possible changes to government in North Yorkshire. The majority of all respondents had not heard about them: over half (54%) said 'no – have not heard', and a further 15% were 'not sure'. However, nearly a third (30%) said 'yes' they have heard about the possible changes, with this increasing to 44% for those aged 55 to 74 years and awareness being higher among men than women (35% 'yes' compared to 26%).

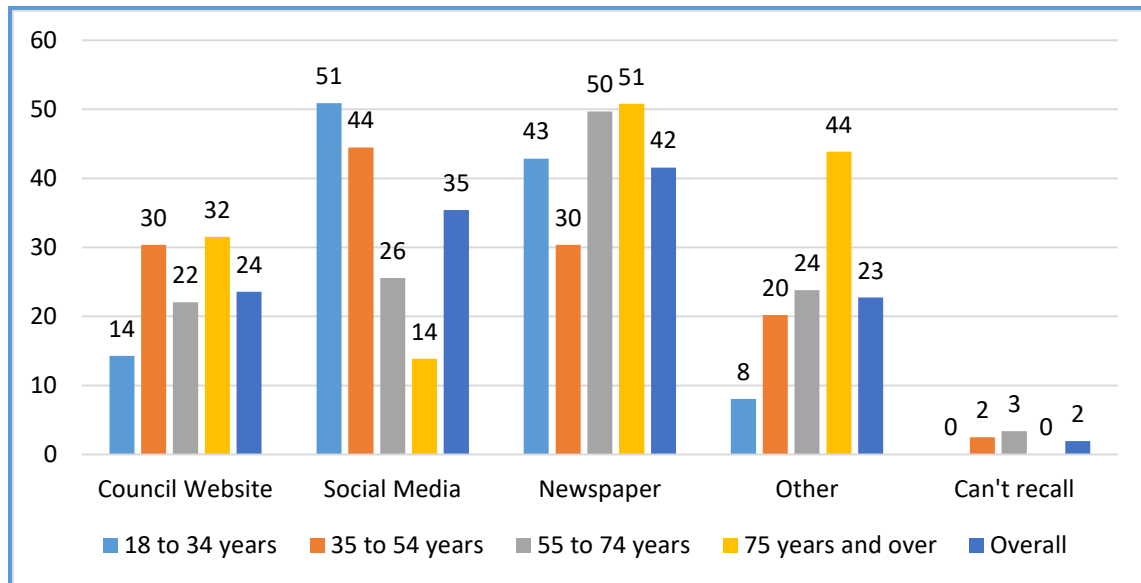
Prior to me calling today had you heard about possible changes to local government in North Yorkshire? (Q1: % response – by age group, gender and overall)



Those respondents who were aware of the possible changes were then asked where they had heard about them. The largest groups of respondents reported that they had heard via a 'newspaper' (42% overall; rising to 50% of those aged 55 to 74 years, and 51% of those aged 75 years and over), and via 'Social Media' (35% overall; reducing to 26% of those aged 55 to 74 years, and 14% of those aged 75 years and over), whilst a quarter (24%) had heard via the 'Council website', 23% mentioned 'other' sources for this information, and 2% could not recall where they had heard. Those who gave 'other' responses were most likely to refer to 'word of mouth' (e.g. from friends/ neighbours/ work colleagues), and to 'television' or 'radio', (see Appendix 3 for details).

Where did you hear about these possible changes?

(Q1a: % response – those that were aware of possible changes – Overall Base = 166)



4.2 Importance of Reasons for City of York’s Preferred Option

Q2 The Council has set out the reasons for its preferred option of York keeping its independent council. I am now going to ask you to what extent you feel these reasons are important. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important how important do you feel it is for:

- A. City of York Council to remain an independent council to reflect York’s history as a distinctive and unique place*
- B. The City of York council to remain an independent council to avoid tens of millions of pounds in reorganisation costs*
- C. Avoiding disruption to existing partnership arrangements for example the working between the council and NHS in response to Covid-19*
- D. Retaining low levels of Council Tax in York (by not subsidising the rural services which inevitably cost more to deliver)*
- E. Remaining an independent council, with locally accountable decision making, to allow City of York Council to concentrate on the residents, communities and economy of York which is different to the coastal and rural economies in other areas.*

Respondents were informed by the interviewers as follows about the possible changes to local government in North Yorkshire:

Thinking about the possible changes, two proposals have been put forward, both resulting in new councils across York and North Yorkshire. The first, from City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council, would see the creation of a single North Yorkshire council replacing the current county and district councils that exist outside of York. City of York Council would remain as an independent council, with no changes to its boundaries or the services it delivers. The second, from the North Yorkshire district

councils would see the whole of North Yorkshire and York split into two councils – East and West. If this option were to go ahead York would become part of a new larger single council covering Scarborough, Ryedale and Selby districts.

They were then asked to say how important or not they feel that each of five of the Council's reasons for remaining an independent Council are, using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'not at all important', and 5 is 'very important'. (Respondents were also offered a 'don't know/ not sure' response). Overall results are summarised in the chart overleaf.

Around three-quarters or more of all respondents were of the view that each of the five Council's reasons listed in the survey were 'very important (5)' or 'fairly important (4)', and less than one-in-ten respondents felt that any of the reasons were 'not at all important (1)' or 'not very important (2)', (responses here ranging between 4% for reason 'C', and 8% for reason 'A'). Around one-in-ten respondents gave 'don't know/ not sure' responses and 'moderately important (3)' responses for each of the five reasons.

A) City of York Council to remain an independent council to reflect York's history as a distinctive and unique place: 77% 'important (4 or 5)'/ 8% 'not important (1 or 2)'

B) The City of York council to remain an independent council to avoid tens of millions of pounds in reorganisation costs: 76% 'important (4 or 5)'/ 6% 'not important (1 or 2)'

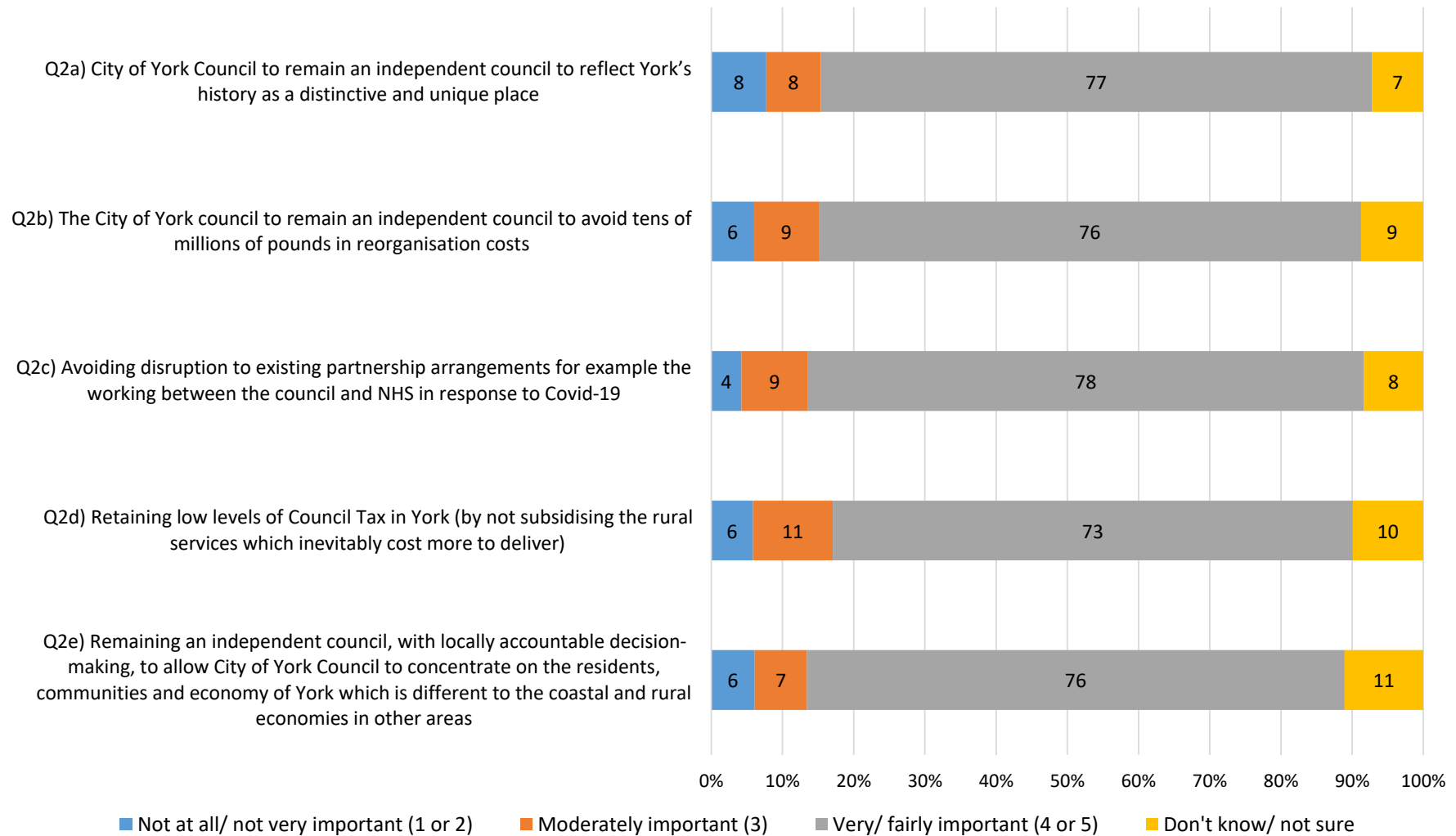
C) Avoiding disruption to existing partnership arrangements for example the working between the council and NHS in response to Covid-19: 78% 'important (4 or 5)'/ 4% 'not important (1 or 2)'

D) Retaining low levels of Council Tax in York (by not subsidising the rural services which inevitably cost more to deliver): 73% 'important (4 or 5)'/ 6% 'not important (1 or 2)'

E) Remaining an independent council, with locally accountable decision-making, to allow City of York Council to concentrate on the residents, communities and economy of York which is different to the coastal and rural: 76% 'important (4 or 5)'/ 6% 'not important (1 or 2)'.

Whilst each of the five reasons listed were regarded as important (very or fairly) by the large majority of respondents, note that reason C was the most positively viewed, and reason D the least positively viewed.

**Q2: Perceived importance of the Council's reasons for remaining an independent Council
(% response - all respondents)**



4.3 Respondent Options Preference

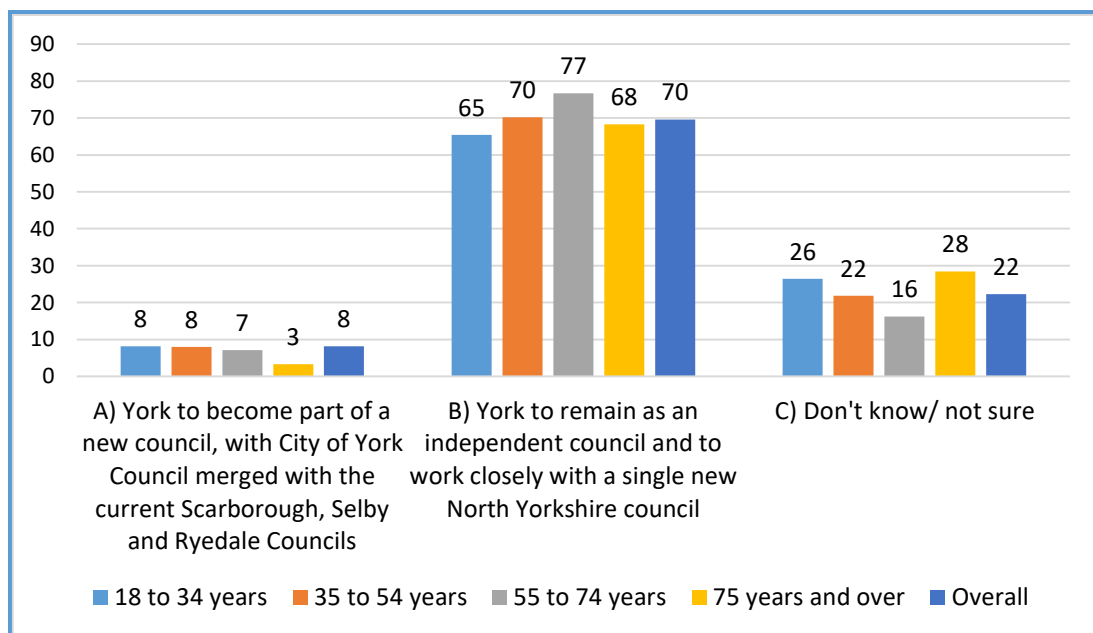
Q3 Which option would you prefer? If you don't have a preference you can just say don't know or not sure.

- A. York to become part of a single council made up of the current Scarborough, Selby, Ryedale and City of York Councils
- B. York to keep its own independent council and to work closely with a single new North Yorkshire council
- C. Don't know/not sure

When presented with two possible options for the future of local government in the City of York more than two-thirds (70%) of all respondents said that they would prefer 'York to remain as an independent council and to work closely with a single new North Yorkshire council', whilst one-in-twelve (8%) overall said that they would prefer 'York to become part of a new council, with City of York Council merged with the current Scarborough, Selby and Ryedale Councils', and 22% did not know or were not sure. The majority support for York to remain as an independent council was consistent across all age groups, rising to over three-quarters (77%) of those aged 55 to 74 years. (Differences by gender were not significant.)

Which of the following options would you prefer?

(Q3: % response – by age group and overall)



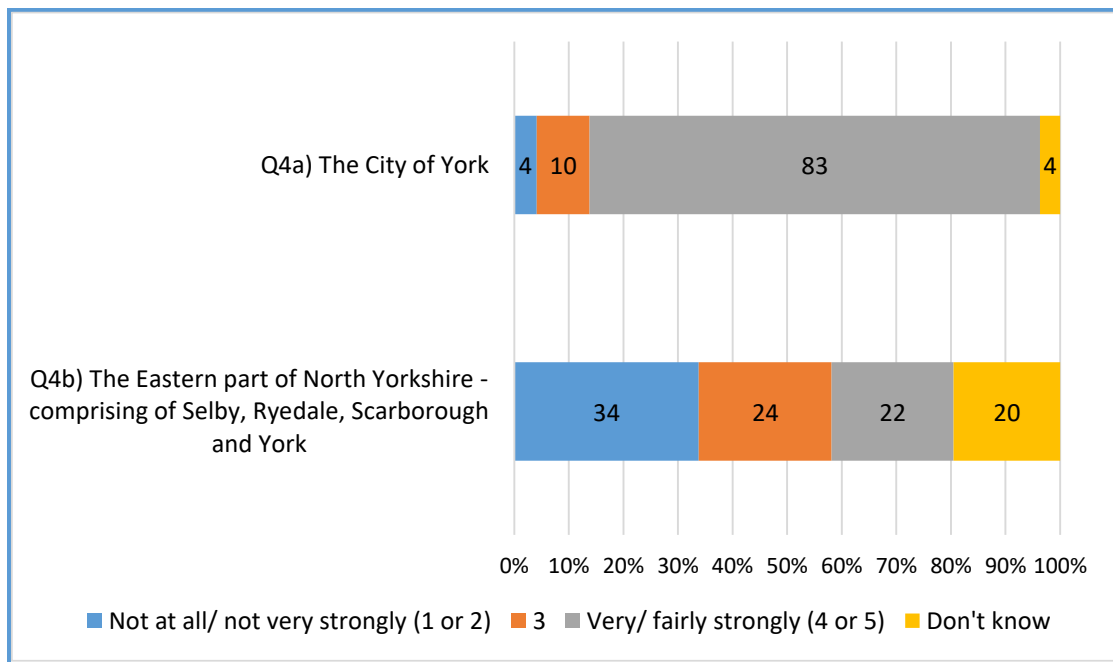
Note that when those respondents who gave a 'don't know/ not sure' response to this question are excluded from the analysis, (i.e. only including 'positive' responses), nine-in ten (90%) of respondents were in favour of York remaining as an independent council, working closely with a single new North Yorkshire Council, and 10% that York become part of a new Council merged with Scarborough, Selby and Ryedale Councils.

4.4 Strength of Belonging – City of York/Eastern Part of North Yorkshire

Q4 On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is very strongly, how strongly would you say you feel a connection to READ OUT AND TRANSPOSE OPTIONS

Respondents’ strength of feeling of belonging to the ‘City of York’ area was much higher than that to the ‘Eastern part of North Yorkshire’: the large majority (83%) of all respondents said that they feel a ‘very strong (5)’ or ‘fairly strong (4)’ connection to the ‘City of York’, and only 4% feel that they are ‘not at all strongly (1)’ or ‘not very strongly (2)’ connected to this place; however, with regards to the ‘Eastern part of North Yorkshire’, a third (34%) of all respondents feel ‘not at all strongly (1)’ or ‘not very strongly (2)’ connected to this area, and less than a quarter (22%) feel a very or fairly strong connection (4 or 5), [24% ‘medium (3)’, and 20% ‘don’t know’].

On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'not at all strongly' and 5 is 'very strongly', how strongly would you say you feel a connection to? (Q4: % response – all respondents)



When compared to the overall sample responses, those respondents aged 55 years and over (88% ‘very/fairly strongly (4 or 5)’) were significantly more likely to feel a strong connection to the ‘City of York’ area, whilst male respondents (7% ‘not at all/ not very strongly (1 or 2)’) were a little more likely to feel only a weak connection.

4.5 Other Comments

Q5 *Finally, Is there anything else you would like to say about the potential changes to local government in North Yorkshire?*

When asked if there was anything else they'd like to say about the 'potential changes to local government in North Yorkshire', one-third (33%) of the total weighted sample offered comments. As shown in the table below the most-mentioned comments related to being 'against merging with the Eastern part of North Yorkshire/ prefer to stay the same' (17%), whilst smaller numbers raised 'information/ consultation issues' (8%), and commented on the 'cost of changes' (5%). Verbatim details are listed at Appendix 3.

		Overall	
		Weighted Col %	Unweighted Count
Q5) Is there anything else you'd like to say about the potential changes to local government in North Yorkshire? (Coded responses)	Against merging with East North Yorkshire/Stay same	17%	94
	Information/consultation issues	8%	39
	Comment on cost of changes	5%	31
	Smaller council more accountable	2%	9
	Concerns about services	1%	4
	No view - does not mind	2%	8
	In favour of merger	2%	8
	Not the time for a change	1%	5
	Other	3%	15
	None given	66%	330
Total		100%	504