

North Yorkshire County Council
Transport, Economy and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 8 July 2015 at 10.00 am.

Present:-

County Councillor Andrew Backhouse in the Chair

County Councillors Robert Baker, John Blackburn (as substitute for Margaret Atkinson), Michael Heseltine, Robert Heseltine, Peter Horton, Bill Houlton (as substitute for Andrew Goss), David Jeffels, Penny Marsden, Bob Packham, Andy Solloway, Richard Welch, and Robert Windass

Other Members present were: Executive County Councillor Don Mackenzie

NYCC Officers attending: Andrew Bainbridge, Team Leader LTP (BES), David Bowe, Corporate Director (BES), Richard Owens, Assistant Director – Integrated Passenger Transport, and Jonathan Spencer, Corporate Development Officer (Central Services).

Present by invitation: Roger Wantling, Area 12 Service Delivery Team Leader, Highways England

No members of the public were in attendance.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

75. Minutes

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2015, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

76. Public Questions or Statements

There were no general public questions or statements from members of the public concerning issues not on the agenda.

77. Business and Environmental Services Directorate

Considered -

The oral report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services.

The key issues reported by David Bowe were as follows:-

- Devolution: The County Council was involved in various discussions about devolution with other local authorities in the region. This included the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and other local authorities in the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding area.
- The Northern Powerhouse: The County Council was putting the case forward to Transport for the North for there to be good travel connections across the whole of the North of England, and not just between cities, in order to fully realise economic growth. The presentations that the County Council had made to Transport for the North had been well-received and had highlighted the economic importance and size of the North Yorkshire economy to the whole region.
- Executive Member Cllr Don Mackenzie and David Bowe had attended a meeting of Harrogate Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 6 July 2015 to respond to questions relating to Highways issues raised by District Councillors, members of the public and the Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce.
- The Highways Maintenance Contract (HMC) 2012 Evaluation Panel held been held on 29 June 2015. The outcome was that the Term of the Contract should remain unchanged and the expiration will be 31 March 2021. The County Council was still in discussions with Ringway regarding opportunities to work together to be more productive. Some of the existing performance indicators had not driven the right outcomes and these would be amended. Also a different payment mechanism would be utilised to drive performance. Revising some of the performance indicators would give Ringway a genuine chance of winning back a year of the contract. A more comprehensive update on the results of the Evaluation Panel and progress in the year to date would be provided to the Committee at its meeting on 14 October 2015.

Members made the following key comments:

- Clarification was sought on the extent to which the performance indicators for the HMC would be made less challenging, and the progress that had been made on improving the performance of gully-emptying. David Bowe replied that the performance indicators that would be revised related to those where targets had been set unrealistically high in the past. One example was the existing target of 100% of dangerous defects being fixed within 24 hours of the defects being reported. Ringway had in fact achieved over 99% but this was classed as a 'fail' at present, even though this performance was better than for many other counties elsewhere in the country. With regards to gully-emptying, performance was not as good as the County Council would like but performance was improving. Performance was expected to improve further by the implementation of an efficiency programme.
- A Member expressed concern that there were a number of highways jobs outstanding in his area and Ringway seemed slow to respond to requests for these to be completed. The County Council's Area Highway Office was not able to influence Ringway and instead it seemed to be the case that Ringway was dictating what work would be completed and by when. David Bowe replied that this was exactly why change was required and why the County Council and Ringway were working together to achieve better outcomes. At present there was not always a balance between the work ordered and the resources able to be deployed to undertake the work. In order to rectify this situation agreement was being reached about having longer term programmes of work. The outcome would be that Ringway would have direct responsibility in completing the work to a set time and the County Council as the client would

only pay the value of the work done rather than, as was currently the case, on the basis of the work ordered.

- A Member commented that there were instances in his area of the highways contractor, when undertaking gully emptying, leaving the detritus at the side of the gully. Consequently when it rained the detritus was deposited back into the gully. David Bowe said that he would follow this up with contractor.
- The process was convoluted for dealing with complaints relating to accident damage to vehicles caused by road defects. Members of the public did not know who to contact and were passed between the County Council and the contractor. David Bowe replied that it was the contractor's responsibility, not North Yorkshire County Council's, to deal with such claims and so such complaints should be directed to the contractor.

Resolved -

That the oral report from the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services be noted.

78. Highways England

Considered -

The oral report of the Service Delivery Team Leader for Highways England, updating the Committee on improvements being carried out on the strategic roads in the county (A64, A1 and A66).

Roger Wantling referred to:

- the summary of works undertaken in 2014/15 on the A64 in Appendix 1 of the covering report;
- the summary of works undertaken or programmed in 2015/16 on the A64 in Appendix 2 of the covering report;
- the A1(M) D2D (Darrington to Dishforth) scheme and the list of the planned works for 2015/16 in Appendix 3 of the covering report; and
- the improvements being carried out on the A66 in 2015 listed in Appendix 4 of the covering report.

He went on to explain that in April 2015 the Highways Agency had been transformed into Highways England, changing it from a government agency to a government-owned company. The rationale for the change was to provide greater certainty of funding and provide more flexibility to enable Highways England to become a better business. Two new bodies - The Office of Rail and Road and Transport Focus – would hold Highways England to account:

Members made the following key comments:

- A Member commended Highways England for its recent measures to improve the visibility on junctions on the A66 within his division.
- Grass on the A64 Staxton roundabout triangles was not being cut on a sufficiently regular basis. The issue was that one part was on land owned by North Yorkshire County Council and the other was on land owned by Highways England. The Member asked if Highways England could take over responsibility for cutting the grass on all sections of the roundabout. Roger Wantling said that

he would look into this matter.

- Future plans to de-trunk roads to local authorities in light of the new freedoms and flexibilities provided to Highways England. Roger Wantling replied that currently there were no plans to do this.

Resolved -

That the oral report of Roger Wantling, Service Delivery Team Leader, Highways England be noted.

79. Rail North and Franchise Update

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services providing an update on Rail North and the Franchise competitions for TransPennine Express and Northern.

Richard Owens summarised the report, outlining the work of Rail North Ltd. and the progress of the TransPennine Express and Northern rail franchises.

Invitations to tender had closed on 25 May for the TransPennine franchise and 26 June for the Northern franchise. Three companies had been shortlisted for each of the Northern and TransPennine Express franchises. The bids were in the process of being evaluated and the successful bidders would be known this autumn. The minimum specification set out in the Invitations to Tender represented a marked service enhancement from what is currently operated, particularly for the Northern franchise. The County Council, together with the LEP, had also met with the bidders to articulate its 'asks' and provide intelligence in relation to the local economy and known housing growth, both of which support better and more frequent train services.

Richard Owens went on to summarise the governance arrangements of Rail North Ltd. and Transport for the North. The role of Transport for the North was to set out a high level transport strategy for the North of England.

Members made the following key comments:

- The extent to which North Yorkshire County Council would be able to influence the strategy of Transport for the North in view of the County Council not sitting on the partnership. Richard Owens replied that whilst it was the case that the County Council was not under any illusion that it was a major player, it did have a close working relationship with the West Yorkshire local authorities and was putting forward the case for North Yorkshire rail schemes. The County Council was also part of a wider reference group of the remaining non-City northern local transport authorities. This was providing the Council with the opportunity to set out North Yorkshire's key strategic transport requirements and to highlight the importance of improving rail connections across the whole of the North of England.
- The impact, if any, of the shelving of Network Rail's upgrade of the Trans-Pennine route on the franchisees. Richard Owens said as far as he was aware the funding for the electrification of the line had been delayed, rather than permanently removed. Officers were still examining the details of the government announcement and at present it was not clear about the precise

impacts locally, including upon the electrification of the Leeds-Harrogate-York railway line.

- The Committee had agreed at its previous meeting on 15 April 2015 to support in principle the scheme to reinstate the Leeds-Wetherby-Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton Railway Line and had asked Executive Members to consider providing a financial contribution towards the cost of the feasibility study. A Member asked for a progress update noting that the Committee's recommendations had been presented to the BES Executive Members Meeting on 5 June. Richard Owens replied that at present a timetable was not in place. There was a need first to get a better understanding of where such a proposal rated in importance relative to other transport initiatives. The budget for funding feasibility studies was limited and so there was a need to choose which proposal would best deliver and with whom. Typically such projects had timescales of 30 years and what was key was to get the timing of any study right, involve the rail industry, and dovetail with other rail developments.
- The impact that the devolution debate could have upon rail developments in the region. Richard Owens replied that the County Council was working to highlight the importance of improving rail connections across the whole of the North of England and would continue to do so. A Member suggested that all Members would benefit from a follow-up Members Seminar on the devolution agenda. This would be in particular around the current thinking about the geographic coverage of a Combined Authority that the County Council could join.

Resolved -

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That a follow-up Members Seminar be held on the devolution agenda, in particular to discuss the current thinking about the geographic coverage of a Combined Authority that the County Council could be part of.

80. Local Transport Plan 2016/2046 (LTP4)

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services setting out the proposal for undertaking the Local Transport Plan (LTP4), to be implemented in April 2016.

Andrew Bainbridge introduced the report. He explained that whilst there remained a statutory requirement for the County Council to produce a Local Transport Plan, there was no longer a set format or timeframe that the document should cover.

The proposals for the new LTP were:

- For the document to be shorter in length and in separate sections so that people could get to the information that they wanted to find more quickly;
- For the life of the plan to cover a 30 year time period to reflect the lengthy timeframe required for developing and implementing major road and rail schemes;
- Key sections to include the Local Transport Strategy and Local Transport Objectives, identifying the County Council's highest transport priorities; and
- Themed Sections to be included covering public transport, road safety, highway maintenance, walking and cycling, transport and development, and air quality.

An initial consultation to establish people's views on priorities for LTP4 was carried out in May to June 2015. The results showed that the priorities had not changed to those in LTP3. Most respondents attach greater importance to services relating to maintenance rather than those relating to the provision of new facilities.

Andrew Bainbridge went on to refer to the proposed objectives for LTP4 set out in paragraph 7.2 of the report.

Public consultation on the draft document would commence in the autumn and the document would be submitted to the Committee's meeting on 14 October 2015.

He went on to seek the Committee's views on the proposals for the development of LTP4, with particular focus on the proposed LTP objectives.

Members made the following comments:

- The extent to which the County Council was, and would be, working with neighbouring local authorities to ensure that capital projects of a cross border nature were compatible, and the extent to which local Members would be involved in discussions about projects in their area. Andrew Bainbridge replied that County Council officers regularly met with their counterparts in neighbouring authorities, particularly since the creation of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP and the Leeds City Region. Officers were also in regular contact with their counterparts in the local authorities in East Lancashire. The new governance arrangements arising out of the devolution debate would also be taken into account. In respect of Member involvement, the allocation of funding for capital projects was set out through the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, which was approved by the County Council. Members' input had to be balanced against an auditable process.
- There were numerous consultations but the end product did not seem to be ever reached. A case in point was the A64; instead of investing in a dual carriageway funding had been spent on the wrong things. More generally people wanted to see active progress and know when projects would be completed. Andrew Bainbridge replied that the A64 was the responsibility of Highways England and not North Yorkshire County Council. However the County Council together with Ryedale District Council and Scarborough Borough Council had commissioned work for additional development schemes on the A64 in order to influence the Highways Agency. The problem was though that funding regimes kept changing and the dualling of the A64 in its entirety would cost into the hundreds of millions of pounds.
- There was a need to be in situation where there were 'shovel ready' highway schemes in place. Andrew Bainbridge replied that the County Council was currently identifying funding to invest in major schemes on our own roads such as the A59 and A61. It was hoped that this would help put the County Council in a better position to bid for funding. In order to get to a 'shovel ready' stage however a lot of expenditure was involved in putting forward schemes, including meeting various planning, environmental and other legal requirements.
- The extent to which North Yorkshire district councils' were involved in the development of the new LTP and the links that were being made to their Local Plans. Andrew Bainbridge confirmed that the County Council worked closely together with North Yorkshire district councils on such planning issues. There

was a duty to co-operate on the development of local plans.

Resolved -

That the proposals for the development of LTP4 be approved.

81. Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader inviting the Committee to:

- (a) Note the information in the report.
- (b) Confirm, amend or add to the areas of work shown on the Work Programme schedule (attached as Appendix A to the report).

Jonathan Spencer explained that the Ryedale Area Committee at its meeting on 10 June 2015 had considered a petition opposing 'fracking' [shale gas extraction] and all other forms of unconventional fossil fuel extraction in North Yorkshire. The Area Committee had subsequently recommended to the Executive that the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee should investigate further the implications of fracking. The Executive at its meeting on 7 July 2015 had supported this approach. The suggested role of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be to investigate the environmental impacts of fracking.

Resolved -

- a) That the items listed in the future Work Programme schedule be agreed.
- b) That the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee's meeting in January 2016 be reserved for a discussion on the environmental impacts of shale gas extraction.

The meeting concluded at 12.11pm

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