

North Yorkshire County Council

Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 1 February 2017 at 10.00 am.

Present:-

County Councillor Andrew Backhouse in the Chair

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Robert Baker, Robert Heseltine, Peter Horton, Bill Hault, David Jeffels, Penny Marsden, Bob Packham, Caroline Patmore (as substitute), Andy Solloway, Richard Welch and Robert Windass.

NYCC Officers attending: David Bowe – Corporate Director (BES), James Farrar, NYCC Assistant Director – Economic Partnership Unit (BES), Jamie Simms, Head of Workforce Development (CS), Rachel Richards, Public Health Consultant (HAS) and Jonathan Spencer, Corporate Development Officer (Central Services).

Present by invitation: Hannah Beever, YNYER LEP Enterprise Partnership Officer

There were no members of the public were no members of the public in attendance.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

The Chairman acknowledged the death of County Councillor Michael Heseltine on 30 December 2016. County Councillor Michael Heseltine had served on the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for many years. He was a County Councillor from 1977 to 2016 representing Richmondshire North, and he held office as Chairman of the County Council in 2005 to 2006. Members held a silence in his memory.

119. Minutes

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

120. Public Questions or Statements

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

121. YNYER Local Enterprise Partnership Update

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services providing an update on performance of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local

Enterprise Partnership (YNYER LEP), including 2017 performance against targets, Local Growth Fund update, EU funding update, collaboration with neighbouring Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Brexit and Industrial Strategy.

James Farrar presented the report. He also provided the details of the formal announcement of the Local Growth Deal 3 bid outcome as circulated at the meeting (YNYER factsheet).

Members made the following key points:

- With reference to the launch of the Apprenticeship Strategy referred to in paragraph 2.3.2, a Member queried whether apprenticeships were simply providing a cheap way of training people. James Farrar explained that the Apprenticeship Strategy was intended to tackle this by putting into place a more structured approach with national standards. The focus for the LEP was on quality rather than quantity of apprenticeships and this included introducing degree level apprenticeships to help retain young people in the county. Hannah Beever explained about the progression route of the new apprenticeships and the fact that employers were being encouraged to see apprenticeships as a longer term investment rather than employing an individual for 12 months as a stop gap measure.
- A Member referred to paragraph 2.4.5 of the report relating to the review of Ministry of Defence (MOD) sites and sought further information. James Farrar explained that the review would be two-fold. The first aspect would look at capitalising upon the growth of Catterick Garrison as a 'super garrison'. The second aspect would be looking at where MOD sites had closed or were going to close to establish the impact and potential growth opportunities. Historically the MOD had not shared its plans for disposal of sites until the point at which they planned to sell the land. The LEP needed to know the MOD's longer term plans sooner, however, so that growth opportunities could be realised.
- With reference to the outcome of the Local Growth Deal 3 bid, a Member noted that it was a good result but the funding would have been higher if politicians had got their act together for producing a Yorkshire wide devolution deal.
- A Member noted that whilst it was important to attract businesses by introducing the next generation broadband, the weakness was in mobile phone coverage. Dates and times were needed for when people living in rural areas would have good coverage.
- The implications of Brexit that the LEP needed to consider were also in relation trading relationships with other countries outside the EU including the USA.

Resolved -

- (a) The performance of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership be noted.
- (b) The work in responding to the Industrial Strategy in order to respond to the challenges presented by the UK exit from the EU is supported.

122. Corporate Director's Update

Considered -

The oral update from the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services

David Bowe provided the following update.

- Project to improve mobile phone coverage in North Yorkshire: The County Council had met with the four key telecommunications' providers to establish what the current barriers were. Reasons given by the providers were lack of access to land, access to power and planning permission. The County Council was looking to see how the county could be seen to be a welcoming geography to providers. The proposal was to appoint a member of staff to work with providers to source land and find power and get the mobile phone providers across the threshold of planning. North Yorkshire district councils were also supportive of this position and the two National Parks Authorities. The mobile phone providers would also be encouraged to share masts to reduce costs.
- 'Smart community': a village pilot was being sought to establish what communications were required, including innovative ways of rolling out the next generation broadband and mobile connectivity. This could include for example the use of street-lighting columns to be used to connect back through the county's Wider Area Network to allow the transfer of data at high speed broadband width.
- Tadcaster Bridge: The widened bridge would be officially opened on 3 February 2017.
- 2020 savings initiatives (BES): savings to meet the 2020 targets were in hand.
- Street works permitting approach: A new approach would be introduced providing a better control of utilities using the network.
- Allerton Waste Recovery Park update: The Allerton Waste Recovery Park was on target to be operational in 2018.
- Disposal of toxic materials: A study was being undertaken to establish how toxic materials such as ash felt products used in the road network could be recycled. The idea was to purchase a site in North Yorkshire such as an old quarry to establish a plant for the county and the wider area. Currently a business case was being produced.
- Tour de Yorkshire 2017: arrangements were on track.
- The National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF): The County Council had secured £5.1m from the fund to improve local roads and public transport. A condition of the grant was that the funding had to be spent in 2017/18 and that the schemes to be funded were in addition to any planned maintenance or programmes for 2017/18. The schemes identified for NPIF funding were 'shovel ready' schemes aimed at easing congestion, unlocking economic job creation opportunities and enabling delivery of new housing development.
- Economic growth: North Yorkshire County Council's Growth Plan was influencing the Council Plan, Strategic Economic Plan, the Transport Prospectus, Transport for the North and local plans. There was merit in developing a spatial framework in the county to help ensure that local plans were more inter-linked across the whole of the county for example improving East-West connectivity. The County Council was producing a study around

improving East-West connectivity to highlight the benefits to Transport for the North of funding a programme of works rather than just individual schemes.

Members made the following key points:

- In respect of improved coverage of mobile phone connectivity there was a need to persuade the Planning Authorities in North Yorkshire and in turn local communities including parish councils about the value of permitting more mobile phone masts to be erected. David Bowe replied that it was an interesting challenge but there was a balance to be had as people were becoming more dependent upon mobile phone technology. He said that he sensed that there was a groundswell of opinion in local communities towards accepting the need for more mobile phone masts to be erected.
- A Member commented upon the conundrum of whether local authorities in North Yorkshire should be involved in providing funding to telecommunications companies. He said that he felt that there was a strong case to do so in light of the current market failure. However it would be important to ensure that all landowners were approached and not just the County Council so that the pace of mobile phone coverage could be increased quickly. David Bowe commented that this would be the case but in order to ensure a number of quick wins County Council land would not be ruled out particularly as the County Council owned significant amounts of land.
- Commenting upon the smart community pilot, a Member said that the creation of rural business zones and jobs would be key to attracting businesses to move into rural areas. It was however a case of a 'chicken and egg' situation if connectivity remained poor in rural areas. Likewise though there needed to be a demand for the new technologies in the first place. It was a case of establishing what would need to come first and then working with partners including local communities to get their buy-in.
- A Member noted that a key obstacle in the past to improving broadband connectivity was that the rollout depended upon government grants. Restrictions meant that public sector bodies could not provide infrastructure up to domestic dwellings. He asked if this was likely to change. David Bowe replied that the obstacle was the State Aid rules in terms of using public funds in a private sector market. However if the County Council could make use of its own land to build masts the problems of State Aid rules did not arise.

Resolved -

That the update be noted.

123. North Yorkshire Director of Public Health Annual Report Update

Considered -

The report of the North Yorkshire Director of Public Health providing an overview of progress on the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2016 about the working age population and their health and wellbeing.

Rachel Richards introduced the report, outlining the two strategic objectives of 'Creating Healthy Workplaces' and 'Building healthy workforces'.

Members made the following key points:

- Referring to paragraph 4.1 of the report, a Member said that whilst he saw the merit of the national public health concept Making Every Contact Count (MECC), he hoped that it was not too prescriptive. Rachel Richards replied that the MECC approach was undertaken at the point of need and tailored to individual situations. For example paramedics were trained to ask patients who required their services, questions on basic things to improve that patient's health.
- A Member said that she was a sceptic when it came to MECC and other similar initiatives and thought that they could be viewed by the public as 'nanny state' impositions. Rachel Richards affirmed that people would still have choices but such initiatives were important to allow people to be better informed to stop their health deteriorating. For example through hospitals 'Health Improving Hospitals Approach' smokers were being encouraged to use e-cigarettes and patches as an alternative. By people making positive choices about their lifestyle it would then free up services to those in greatest need.
- A Member said that whilst he supported the approach he felt that it would be an uphill task promoting such cultural change including amongst NHS staff who were often smokers. He went on to note that there was no mention of the benefits of cycling in the report. He said that there needed to be education of other road users and also a minority of cyclists as to the etiquette and 'rules of the road'.

Resolved -

The Wellbeing Charter and the MECC approach and support progress towards creating 'good, healthy growth' in the population, as detailed in the report, be championed.

124. Apprenticeships

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support) providing an update on North Yorkshire County Council's activities on apprenticeships and other employment support initiatives in the context of the Government's national reforms to apprenticeships.

Jamie Simms and Hannah Beever presented the report and an update report circulated at the meeting. The areas covered included the new national apprenticeship scheme including the public sector apprenticeship target, workforce data and planning, wider working with partners and additional support for younger people.

Members made the following key points:

- Referring to paragraph 4.9 of the report, a Member queried why voluntary aided and academy schools were not included in the apprenticeship levy requirements in contrast to community and voluntary controlled schools. Jamie Simms confirmed that this was because the local authority was not the employer of voluntary aided and academy schools. Employers with a pay bill of over £3 million pounds would be required to pay the annual Levy. Local

authorities had lobbied government for maintained schools to be treated as separate entities in line with voluntary aided and academy schools. However the government had not responded to this.

- o A Member queried whether people who had been seconded to work for another organisation would be included in the employer levy. He also asked in what situations current employees would be able to qualify as well as new starters and whether there was a percentage of the workforce who could qualify. In response to the second point Jamie Simms replied that the rules did allow employers to draw down a levy for existing staff but only in certain situations such as redeployment. This was to ensure that unscrupulous employers did not 're-employ' staff as apprentices simply to draw down funding. With regards to County Council staff seconded to an apprenticeship in another organisation, the County Council would be able to claim funding back. The rules prevented the pooling of the levy but enabled joint procurement. He gave the example of the Care Act, which gave the County Council responsibility to support all members of public and to act as care provider of last resort. There were discussions to be had with the private sector to see how the County Council could underpin the care sector for example by employing staff and then seconding them to the home support sector. There were complexities and risks to doing this as the County Council would be the employer with associated liabilities and indemnities but it was technically possible.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

125. Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Development Officer 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 noted that partly as a result of the work of the Joint Sub-Committee of Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny of Health Committee in 2016, the finalised draft Minerals and Waste Plan now included more robust safeguards around shale gas and oil extraction. With the Chairman's permission, the next scheduled meeting of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 26 April 2017 had been cancelled due to the meeting falling in the immediate period leading up to the General Election. Group Spokespersons would meet on 7 March 2017 as scheduled and would be provided with an update on the construction of the Allerton Waste Recovery Park and, as part of the work on Brexit, would feed into the County Council's response to the government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper. The Chairman reported that all Members of the Committee would be invited to feed into the response.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.28pm

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