

North Yorkshire County Council

Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 23 January 2018 at 10.00 am.

Present:-

County Councillor Mike Jordan in the Chair

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Robert Heseltine, David Jeffels, Stanley Lumley, Don Mackay, John McCartney, Andy Paraskos, Clive Pearson, Roberta Swiers, Angus Thompson (sub. Caroline Patmore) and Richard Welch

Other Members present were:

Executive County Councillor Andrew Lee

County Councillors Caroline Patmore and Cliff Trotter

NYCC Officers attending: David Bowe – Corporate Director (BES), James Farrar, NYCC Assistant Director – Economic Partnership Unit (BES), Lisa Cooper, Commercial Manager – Waste (BES), Ian Fielding, Assistant Director – Waste Management, Waste and Countryside Services (BES), Liz Small, Heritage Services Manager (BES), Matthew Millington, Local Nature Partnership Development Officer (BES) and Jonathan Spencer, Corporate Development Officer (Central Services).

Apologies were received from County Councillor Paul Haslam.

No members of the public were in attendance.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

18. Minutes

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

19. Public Questions or Statements

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

20. Corporate Director's Update

Considered -

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

David Bowe provided the following update.

- The Stephenson's bus company had gone into liquidation on Friday 19 January 2018 with no notice given. The company operated both school and local bus services under contract to the County Council as well as providing a commercial bus network. The County Council's integrated passenger transport team worked throughout the weekend to put alternative bus services in place. The focus for the County Council was initially on the 27 school transport contracts that Stephenson's provided for 900 secondary and primary pupils entitled to free school transport in the Ryedale, Harrogate and Hambleton districts. Arrangements managed to be put in place to cover all of those school transport contracts on an emergency basis using other local operators. The County Council was not at the time able to secure replacement local bus services provided under contract to the council for 10 routes. Of those, six were subsidised bus routes and four were commercial bus routes. Of the four commercial bus routes, three had now been taken up by other bus operators. The six subsidised bus routes would be going out to tender with the deadline for bids being 17 February 2018.
- The Minerals and Waste Joint Plan examination would commence on 26 February 2018 and finish on 23 March 2018, with a week's break from 5 March 2018. Discussions were currently being held regarding the venue to be used in Northallerton. The Minerals and Waste Joint Plan was a very comprehensive document having involved substantial work over a number of years and it was anticipated that the Plan would be adopted. The hope was that the document would be able to be submitted to Full Council before summer 2018. However at present the timescale was in the hands of the inspector and it could be that further consultation was required.
- The Directorate's savings plans had been discussed in detail at the recent Members Seminar. David Bowe said that he was confident that the savings could be delivered without an adverse impact on the service. An issue was in relation to green credits. The County Council currently paid North Yorkshire district councils a credit for the green waste that they collected. Technically and legally, however, the County Council was not required to provide the district councils with a payment for disposing of green waste provided the County Council disposed of it. The directorate's savings plan would see a reduction in the payment provided to the district councils. There were no plans to phase out the contribution altogether because it was recognised that there was a need for green waste to be collected. The savings would see a £890,000 reduction in green credits paid to the district councils. This could result in the district councils increasing the charge to customers on the green bin collection.

Members made the following key comments:

- A Member said that he wished to formally record his thanks to staff in the County Council's integrated passenger transport team for working to resolve the issue of Stephenson's bus company going into liquidation. He suggested that an update on rural bus services be included on the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme.
- A Member commented that as a result of the reduction in green credits, Selby District Council was required to find £300,000 per annum savings next year. David Bowe queried the figure and noted that Selby District Council currently did not charge residents for green waste bin collection and so could recover the figure by doing so. He noted that Harrogate Borough Council's charge to

residents for green waste bin collection was now £39 per customer per annum.

- A number of Members reported various technical issues that parish councils were finding when using the County Council's parish portal. Members were receiving several complaints from parishes regarding the lack of feedback on the status of reports made by parishes. This was resulting in unnecessary correspondence to parishes to then confirm about the progress being made. The system also did not generate a unique number for each report. David Bowe said that he would look into the issues and explore the feasibility of the portal generating unique numbers for each report.
- A Member mentioned that there had been no gritting on the main roads in Pateley Bridge and the Nidderdale area more widely on 18 January 2018. He had received many complaints about this and the fact that the salt bins had not been replenished. Local contractors were available but they had not been called until after 7.30am which was too late. Schools were closed as a result. The snow had turned to slush and then froze which resulted in the pavements being slippery. Harrogate Borough Council had gritted the car parks. David Bowe said that he was aware of the issues and noted that the driver of the snow plough had struggled with the conditions but he said he would find out why from the Area Highways Office and report back to the Member concerned.

Resolved -

That the update be noted.

21. Update on the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership

Considered - The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services updating on activities of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership.

Liz Small presented the report.

Members made the following key comments:

- A Member queried the term 'catchment sensitive farming' listed in paragraph 6.3 of the report, noting that farm profitability was important now and in the future. Liz Small explained that catchment sensitive farming was about putting in place measures to promote soil health by stopping soil run-off. This included improving ploughing methods, such as ploughing a field horizontally to stop diffuse water pollution from agriculture running into river catchments and degrading the soil. Matt Millington added that it was a Natural England led-initiative intended to be a starting point of looking at how a farm business was run, address issues and reduce costs. It was not about penalizing farmers.
- In respect of the theme of promoting nature tourism cited in the report, a Member commented upon the preventative health opportunities of encouraging people to walk and cycle to create a healthier nation and thereby reduce the pressures on the NHS. He commented that the Local Access Forum was prioritising this as an area as well. There was considerable economic value so far as tourism was concerned in North Yorkshire due to the landscape. He mentioned about the launch on 23 January 2018 of the Catchment Management Plans of the Dales to Vales River Network, a project to enhance the River Ure by a partnership of local farmers and interested organisations. He went on to ask whether the Local Nature Partnership had a policy stance on

fracking. Liz Small mentioned that as fracking was a political issue the LNP did not take a stand as to whether it was a good or a bad idea; its role instead was to support environmental projects.

- A Member asked if the LNP worked closely with the Nidderdale AONB. Liz Small said that whilst the Nidderdale AONB was in a different LNP to the North Yorkshire and York LNP, some of the projects were included due to covering a wider geographical area. Nidderdale AONB led on a lot of biodiversity projects for instance. Some of the North Yorkshire and York LNP's projects in North Yorkshire included the Yorkshire Dales as well. There were close links between the LNPs including frequent regional meetings.
- A Member asked if the work of the LNP was dovetailing in with the government's recently launched 25 Year Environment Plan looking at ways to improve the environment. Liz Small confirmed that this was the case and noted that the Environment Plan saw LNPs as a key mechanism of delivery.
- A Member said that it was important to guard against drifting too far towards conservation and away from economic growth in rural areas. This was particularly so if it meant that agricultural productivity would suffer. Liz Small said that there was a move locally to balance the two aspects, for example establishing how farms could be better managed and at the same time looking at the environmental benefits for a farm by changing its working practices. A sound reason to prioritise nature tourism was to generate farm income especially in upland farming areas where it was more difficult to make a profit from farming alone.

Resolved -

That the update be noted.

22. YNYER Local Enterprise Partnership Annual Update

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services updating on the performance of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP Partnership and providing Members with an opportunity to input priorities that they would like to see feature in a Local Industrial Strategy.

James Farrar presented the report.

Members made the following key comments:

- A Member commented that in respect of the challenge of the rurality of the county, Nidderdale Plus was a community hub with a focus on the business needs of the area. It was an excellent service but was challenged for funding. It was essential for the LEP to get the word out about the available funding and to make those local links. In Nidderdale one or two businesses had done well from the LEP but others were not aware of the funding and support available. He asked if the LEP could do more marketing to rural areas such as Nidderdale. Nidderdale Plus could join up with the LEP to assist. James Farrar mentioned that the LEP worked with Nidderdale Plus but acknowledged that the LEP could improve its marketing so that more businesses could benefit. There could be the possibility of co-branding with Nidderdale Plus in the future

but the LEP would not be able to provide Nidderdale Plus with funding to employ someone in this regard due to this being classed as revenue rather than capital.

- With reference to the EU funded programmes detailed in the report, a Member expressed concern about what would happen after the UK left the EU in terms of business uncertainty. James Farrar noted that the approach of government was through the Industrial Strategy, with LEPs being responsible for drawing up and implementing Local Industrial Strategies. Also the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was intended as the replacement to European Structural Investment Funds.
- A Member noted that although Selby district was in two LEPs it did not get much mention in the report. He went on to note about the range of sites in Selby district close to the M62 such as the former Kellingley Colliery and Eggborough Power Station which although prime sites for development had poor connectivity to the M62. As a consequence he feared that future development would be restricted to low paid warehouse jobs, leading to more HGVs adding to the congestion on already busy A roads. Another Member commented that the Highway Agency had not allowed for there to be a link off the A1M at Ferrybridge. The industrial estate at Sherburn-in-Elmet had been expanded but nothing had been done to improve the road infrastructure to it even though this had been raised as an issue of concern over five years ago. The LEP's focus in the district seemed to be only about improving the road system around Tadcaster only. James Farrar mentioned that there had been a number of investments made in Selby. In respect of Sherburn-in-Elmet, the LEP had invested in a bridge. He agreed that improvements to the M62 needed to be looked at as it was a key transport corridor. The amount of investment required would be in the region of £100m though which required investment at the national level. However the LEP was lobbying government about making such improvements.
- In respect of the governance reviews being undertaken in relation to LEPs, a Member commented about a recent newspaper article highlighting that the Leeds City Region LEP had not publicly disclosed the remuneration package of its Chair. He commented that the Mary Ney report was illuminating in respect of its recommendations for LEPs to improve their accountability and transparency, including governance processes. He noted that with regards to YNYER LEP, the County Council was the accountable body but beyond that what was required was wider scrutiny of the LEP. James Farrar explained that the LEP would be convening an annual scrutiny meeting involving all the local authorities in the LEP area. He advised that scrutiny and audit was also undertaken by Veritau.
- A Member queried why in respect of the YNYER LEP's revenue income, East Riding Council only contributed £60,750 p.a. towards the total budget of £948,000. James Farrar explained that the contribution amounts of each local authority in the LEP area were done on a pro-rata basis based on the size of the economy and population size.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

23. Allerton Waste Recovery Park Update

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services updating on current progress of the long term waste treatment project (Allerton Waste Recovery Park) prior to Planned Service Commencement (31 January 2018).

Lisa Cooper presented the report.

- A Member commented that the Allerton Waste Recovery Park (AWRP) was an initiative that the County Council should be rightly proud of; it had shown courage and foresight. He said that it would be beneficial to Members to be provided with a list of benefits with headline figures that they could provide to their parish councils especially; it was a good new story and so should be promoted.
- A Member asked if in the mechanical extraction glass would be taken out. Ian Fielding replied that a substantial amount would be but it would not be specifically targeted for extraction. When enough had been extracted there was the potential to recycle the glass.
- A Member asked how rubbish disposed of in black households bins would be disposed of. Ian Fielding confirmed that Harrogate Borough Council would be taking black bin waste direct to the plant whilst the other district councils would be taking the waste to transfer sites for it to then be transported to the AWRP.
- A Member noted that paper could be contaminated and so asked how the AWRP would deal with this. Ian Fielding explained that the plant could separate out contaminated paper manually for it to then be recycled. The majority of paper received by the AWRP would be contaminated.
- A Member said that he fully supported the facility; the County Council had taken a very difficult decision to build the plant and had been right to stick to its position in the face of public opposition. He noted that each district council in North Yorkshire continued to have a different approach in terms of what types of waste householders could dispose of in their black and green waste bins. He asked if it would be more economically advantageous if rather than newsprint being collected in kerbside recycling collections, it was sent direct to the AWRP for use in generating energy. Ian Fielding said that the AWRP was not about to replace kerbside recycling collections. As a likely rule of thumb it was better to take out materials that could be recycled at the kerbside than further down the line in order to reduce contamination.
- A Member noted that plastic waste had been in the news a lot recently, particularly in respect of the risk that discarded plastic waste posed to the sea. He asked what the approach would be locally and the wider policy agenda. Ian Fielding confirmed that plastic going to the AWRP would either be recycled or used to produce electricity. The government's direction of travel was to reduce the amount of single-use plastic available and as a consequence to reduce the amount of plastic in the waste chain. This could include extending the plastic bag tax to other plastics. The government was expected to publish its Resources and Waste Strategy later in 2018.

- A Member asked if with the introduction of the AWRP it would mean that there would be no more need for landfill. Ian Fielding replied that the need for landfill would not be eradicated by the AWRP but it would mean moving nearer to that goal.
- Executive County Councillor Andrew Lee confirmed that Members would be invited to visit the AWRP in March 2018. The earlier planned visit had had to be cancelled due to the Visitor Centre not being ready. He said that he wished to support the comments that Members had already made. The AWRP had been an ambitious undertaking for the County Council and it had now come to fruition.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

24. Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Development Officer asking the Committee to:

- a) Confirm, amend, or add to the areas of work listed in the work programme schedule (Appendix 1 to the report).
- b) Approve the draft scope of the Vehicle Activated Signs Review (Appendix 2 to the report).

Jonathan Spencer presented the report.

Resolved -

- a) That the following items be added to the work programme: an update report in 2019 on the North Yorkshire and York LNP; Rural Bus Services and Community Transport; and Winter Maintenance Policy for rural and urban areas.
- b) That the Committee approves the draft scope of the Vehicle Activated Signs Review as submitted in Appendix 2 of the work programme report.
- c) That County Councillors Robert Heseltine, David Jeffels, Mike Jordan, John McCartney and Caroline Patmore be appointed to the task group.

The meeting concluded at 12.13 pm

JS