

North Yorkshire County Council

Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 October 2020 remotely using MS Teams, commencing at 10.00 am.

This meeting was live broadcast on the North Yorkshire County Council YouTube site and a recording is available using the following link - <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/live-meetings>

Present:

County Councillor Stanley Lumley in the Chair.

County Councillors Karl Arthur, John Ennis (sub. for Richard Welch), David Goode, Paul Haslam, David Jeffels, Don Mackay, John McCartney, Andy Paraskos, Caroline Patmore, Clive Pearson and Roberta Swiers.

Other County Councillors present: Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie and County Councillor Geoff Webber.

NYCC Officers attending: Karl Battersby, Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services (BES), Justine Brooksbank - Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support) (CS), Tracy Harrison - Head of Training & Learning (CS), Barrie Mason – Assistant Director – Highways & Transportation (BES), Matt O'Neill - Assistant Director -Growth, Planning and Trading Standards (BES) and Jonathan Spencer, Principal Scrutiny Officer (CSD).

Present by invitation: John Nicholson (Ringway)

County Councillors Robert Heseltine and Richard Welch had sent their apologies for absence.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

100. Minutes

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

101. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

102. Public Questions or Statements

There was one statement received from a member of the public (Ruth Annison).

The Chairman invited Ruth Annison to make a statement.

Ruth Annison made the following statement:

“I would like to ask you to consider as urgent business a matter of great concern to me. I know that councillors have very many profound issues to consider because of the pandemic. However, the committee’s Work Programme Schedule 2020/2021 states the Scope of the Committee lists two points directly relevant to the matter I would like to raise with councillors:

- How the needs of the community are met; and
- To consider climate change strategy.

Since 1975, I have been (and still am) a resident of North Yorkshire, business owner and employer in Upper Wensleydale. Through being an employer, I became interested in the provision of public transport (staff need to be able to get to work or training if they do not have the use of a car; family and neighbours should be able to access local facilities; day and staying visitors without cars need to be able to travel into, out of and within the county).

For some years, NYCC has had a policy of not funding Sunday bus services, on the basis that these mainly meet the needs of the leisure market. This policy requires revision, to take account of changes in society in the last half century following the introduction of the Shops Act 1950 and successive legislation. In 1950, a 48-hour working week was the norm, shop prices might still be quoted in guineas and the NHS was only two years old. At that time, churches were open on Sunday – but not much else; and most women did not work after marriage (except possibly for pin money). That era has long gone.

Now we are used to anybody and everybody being out and about on Sundays. To take the example of a bus service I know well: When travelling on the year-round Sunday DalesBus 856, I have met a wide variety of passengers who depend on public transport, including: people travelling to Northallerton station after a week-end in the Dales or students going back to college; people going to church, Sunday employment, shopping or to visit patients in hospital in Northallerton; walkers, people going out to lunch with family and friends, visiting attractions and motorists whose cars were being repaired or serviced. These passengers include people who are elderly, vulnerable and disabled; schoolchildren travelling alone and passengers on concessionary passes from whom fares cannot be recovered but whose reasons for travel also make a significant contribution to the local economy as they pay to eat, shop, stay and spend in North Yorkshire.

NYCC’s policy of not funding Sunday bus services is outdated; it threatens the future of small operators such as DalesBus and Moorsbus and restricts the services available to North Yorkshire’s residents and visitors. The policy is irrelevant to present-day needs and inappropriate as North Yorkshire faces the challenges of climate change. With two National Parks in the county, there are great opportunities for encouraging modal shift for access by integrated public transport (road and rail) instead of by car.

The late Simon Norton of the Foundation for Integrated Transport, pointed out that: “People without access to cars can’t function properly in the society we have built. We have come to tolerate a degree of discrimination against non-motorists far beyond what, in recent years, has increasingly come to be seen as unacceptable for, say, disabled people or sexual minorities.”

I note that this committee meets again on 21st January 2021 and request that the current NYCC Sunday bus funding policy be reviewed by then, with the aim of updating it to meet present-day community needs.

Bus operators have to work to long lead times to register services so funding for public transport on Sundays from Easter 2021 is already a matter of urgency. It should not have to wait for the report and recommendations of the Rural Commission, scheduled for the committee's meeting in April 2021.

The Chairman read out a statement provided by Ian Fielding – NYCC Assistant Director – Waste & Countryside Services, North Yorkshire County Council.

“The County Council recognises that the Dales Bus 856 Sunday service between Northallerton and Hawes provides a popular and convenient additional public transport option to residents and visitors to the Yorkshire Dales and other rural communities on its route. The Dales and Bowland Public Interest Company are to be congratulated for their work in providing this, and other similar services.

Public transport operates commercially in urban areas where the demand provides services seven days per week, but in rural areas the demand is often insufficient to be attractive to commercial operators, and other solutions are needed. When the market fails, the County Council has a power to subsidise public transport and North Yorkshire County Council spends over £1.5m p.a. of Council funds providing local bus services to areas of North Yorkshire that would otherwise not have any service. Last year, approximately 1.3million people benefited by travelling on services provided by North Yorkshire County Council. As a Sunday service, the 856 is not one of those supported by the Council although the Council does subsidise services along the routes between Northallerton and Hawes, including nearby villages throughout the rest of the week as well as on Saturdays.

It is acknowledged that Sunday services provide benefits, but the Council is obliged to prioritise the limited funding within the Council towards areas of greatest need. The Council's approach to subsidising public transport is to provide residents with access to essential services such as shops, markets and healthcare facilities. To redirect funding towards Sunday and leisure bus services would mean that others, often the elderly and the more vulnerable, would be denied the vital transport they need for living, and is therefore not something that can be justified.

However, Dales Bus Sunday services currently receive some funding from elected Members' locality budgets and this remains as an opportunity for Council support, where Members feel it appropriate, for this and other such services that otherwise may fall outside the normal policy framework.”

The Chairman asked if Ruth Annison wanted to respond.

Ruth Annison said that she would write to respond fully but in the meantime would like to draw attention to the fact that some of the information provided in Ian Fielding's statement about services between Northallerton and Hawes were, in her view, not correct in relation to the timetable. She asked for the issues raised in her statement to be incorporated into the timetable for the Committee's meeting in April 2021 and the findings of the Rural Commission.

The Chairman asked Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie to respond.

Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie said that the County Council's budgets were under pressure but it was for the Committee to recommend whether or not the County Council's policy on Sunday bus services should be revised or not. He said that the Statement produced by Ian Fielding had been agreed with him prior to the meeting. Ideally, the County Council would be spending more on buses services including evening and Sunday services. However Elected Members had to make tough choices

when budgets were limited and under great pressure as they were now. The choice that the County Council had made in devising the current policy, which was open to the Committee to try to change it if it viewed that aspects of it were wrong, was that the priority was to subsidise weekday services; to get people to work; and to get people to doctors' appointments and to hospitals. This was over and above the requirements of leisure travellers on a Sunday. The nature of activities on a Sunday had changed, with more people working today on a Sunday than they used to do. However, there were many more people who worked on weekdays and many more people who had to access essential services, including health services, on a weekday than was the case at weekends. That was why the County Council's policy was in place. Until the County Council decided to change the policy, there would continue to be a reliance upon locality budgets etc. to subsidise Sunday services.

Members made the following key points:

- County Councillor David Jeffels said that Ruth Annison had made valid points and he took on board what Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie had said. One way of counteracting the problem was through promotion of local bus services much more so than was currently the case in order to promote behavioural change amongst the public. He liaised closely with the local bus service providers in his division and knew they were very amenable towards any help that could be offered to them. He delivered leaflets to shops in his area and was confident that marketing initiatives could be rolled out without great expense. Members' locality budgets could be used for this; a few hundred pounds from that funding source could be quite effective.
- County Councillor Paul Haslam, said that in anticipation of local government re-organisation and the creation Combined Authorities, a figure needed to be calculated as to how much the ideal service would cost to actively fund services. This was so that when funds became available or legislation changed in how the bus services ran, we would be in a position to go ahead with a 'shovel ready' scheme. He went on to note as well that the government would be doing more to promote de-carbonisation of the transport system in the future. Accordingly, he anticipated that there would be grants that would arise from that so there was a need to be vigilant of the opportunities that occurred. He thanked Ruth Annison from bringing the issues to the Committee's attention.

Resolved –

That the points raised above be noted and taken into account by the Transport, Economy and Environment's Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 14 April 2021 when receiving the rural transport report.

103. Apprenticeships

Considered –

The written report of the NYCC Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support) – Central Services to provide an update on the County Council's activities on apprenticeships in the context of the Government's national reforms to apprenticeships.

Justine Brooksbank explained that North Yorkshire County Council had continued to deliver and support apprenticeships across its workforce and maintained schools. The coronavirus pandemic though had had an impact leading to having to institute breaks in

learning for a number of apprentices. This was because it had not been possible to continue the development and assessment process. Unfortunately, the Council's allocation of its levy transfer and its levy contribution had not been paused though so that money was being removed from the Council's payroll. This was despite not being able to continue with the apprenticeship developments in the way that it had been pre-covid and that continued to be the position.

In terms of the new government announcements around Plans for Jobs and initiatives to support young people into employment, in particular the Kick Start Scheme, the County Council was engaging with those. In particular, the County Council would be an officially recognised broker for the Kick Start Scheme for smaller organisations including local businesses. Services within the County Council had committed to over 40 Kickstart placements internally to support young people into employment working with the LEP.

Since 2019, all levy payers were able to transfer up to 25% of their unspent levy to other businesses and organisations so that they could use that to support their own apprenticeships. The County Council had been successful in spending its levy spend but for maintained schools it had found it more difficult to spend so the Council was working with other organisations to spend locally on transferring levy. There were structural difficulties with the apprenticeship programme that made it difficult especially for small schools to spend the levy and this had repeatedly been fed that back to the government.

Tracy Harrison explained that the County Council was working closely with district councils in providing apprenticeship opportunities. The County Council had also contracted with apprenticeship providers to promote the levy transfer to other businesses to support business. She went on to provide examples and noted that not surprisingly because of the pandemic, the care sector was the biggest growth area, as were opportunities at the Scarborough construction village.

Members made the following key comments:

- County Councillor David Goode referred to paragraph 4.3 of the report where it stated five out of seven councils were actively marketing the County Council's offer through discussions with their local SME's. He asked which district councils were not taking part and what if any similar initiatives they were involved in implementing. Tracy Harrison replied that Scarborough Borough Council and Hambleton District Council were actively developing their own transfer strategy and looking to market those.
- County Councillor David Goode asked for examples of organisations working with contracted apprenticeship training providers and the potential number of apprenticeships that they were generating. Tracy Harrison replied that the County Council had sent an overview of its levy transfer strategy, links to its apprenticeships internet page and flyer to all North Yorkshire based providers and the County Council's contracted providers.
- County Councillor Stanley Lumley noted that a number of older working-age people had or were at risk of losing their jobs arising from the coronavirus pandemic. He asked if the Council was seeing an increase in people in their 40s and upwards looking to re-train and look for different types of work via apprenticeship opportunities. Tracy Harrison replied that this was the case and predicted that there would be a lot more interest in apprenticeships as a way of re-training and changing career paths particularly from those sectors in the economy which had been and continued to be very hard hit by covid.

- County Councillor Stanley Lumley asked why the national government apprenticeship scheme not had the take up as expected and asked if the County Council could do anything more to promote it. Justine Brooksbank said that the lower take-up was due to the structural problems in the way that the scheme was set up for employers. The main problem was that the levy could only be spent on the cost of the training and not the time required for off the job training at college or with another provider. It meant that each week, 20% of an apprentices' time was off the job training at college or with another provider. The government had muted in the early days of the rollout of the scheme the possibility that employers might be able to spend the levy on the employer cost of time in addition to the costs of training providers. However, this had not translated into policy. Another area of challenge was the requirement for people to complete functional skills up to Level 2 – GCSE in Maths and English. This continued to be a sticking point for people taking up apprenticeship because the study had to be done during the evening, proving a barrier in particular for those with parental responsibilities.

Resolved –

That the Committee notes the information in the report.

104. Refresh of North Yorkshire County Council's Plan for Economic Growth

Considered –

The written report of the NYCC Corporate Director - Business and Environmental briefing the Committee on the updated draft version of North Yorkshire County Council's Plan for Economic Growth in the context of the ongoing impact of Covid-19, and seeking the Committee's views.

Matt O'Neill presented the report. He explained that the plan was now over three years old and the purpose of bringing the report to the Committee was to update Members on some of the key successes delivered but also to discuss about the impact of covid-19 on the plan and what was being proposed to be done differently moving forward. He invited comments on the amendments being proposed.

Matt O'Neill said that the differences between the updated draft version of the plan and the previous edition were largely related to the impact of covid-19 to the North Yorkshire economy and some of the structural changes taking place as a result. He went on to explain the impact that the covid-19 pandemic had had upon the North Yorkshire economy to date. Significant impacts had particularly been seen in relation to the leisure, tourism, retail and hospitality sectors. Whilst North Yorkshire had resilience in its labour market spread across lots of sectors, it had a higher than national average proportion of jobs in those now more vulnerable sectors. This had led to a high use of the furlough scheme. The County Council had worked closely with companies during the pandemic, getting them covid secure, providing advice through Trading Standards, providing instant payment terms for SME companies and introducing the buy local website.

Matt O'Neill went on to explain the ways in which the plan had been and continued to be delivered with partners including district councils for example to make sure that the policies of both tier of local authority aligned around town centres. Reference was made to the links to the work of the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise

Partnership and the key successes delivered by the plan in the last three years, as detailed in the report.

The plan had three broad aims: including opportunity for all; increasing good quality jobs; and improving the quality of place North Yorkshire residents live in. The proposal was for the current vision in the plan and the three aims to remain unchanged.

There were then seven enablers sitting beneath those three aims. In response to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, the intention was to make changes to Enabler 3 (increasing skills levels), Enabler 4 (keeping the workforce happy and healthy) and Enabler six (enhancing the environment). Matt O'Neill went on to explain the changes being proposed relating to those enablers.

In terms of timescale for reviewing the plan in future, the suggestion was for the life of the updated document to be for the next three years but with an annual review brought to the committee.

Matt O'Neill asked the Committee for views on the timeframe on when the plan should next be reviewed; the wording of the existing three aims and the seven enablers; and if Members wished to recommend any further changes.

Karl Battersby suggested that reference should be made in the updated plan to North Yorkshire being a good place to do business, for example in terms of having a responsive planning system. He welcomed the emphasis on the 'living well' aspects of the plan, noting that the covid-19 pandemic had accentuated inequalities that had already been present in the population. He noted that although the proposal was for the plan to be reviewed every three years, the Committee might want to receive updates on specific workstreams more frequently. Matt O'Neill referred to the aspects in Enabler 5 concerning creating the right conditions for business growth and investment. He said that he would be able to report to the Committee annually on progress on the plan's delivery.

Members made the following key comments:

- County Councillor David Jeffels said that he was pleased to see reference in the updated draft plan to tourism. Tourism provided the best opportunity in the short term to improve the fortune of the local economy, not just in terms of the hospitality side of the industry but the indirect benefits that tourism provided to other smaller businesses. In Yorkshire as a whole, the tourism industry was worth in the region of £9 billion pounds a year and so there was therefore a lot of potential, with the hope being that in 2021 the local economy would see a change in its fortunes. He supported the fact that the County Council was continuing to work with Welcome to Yorkshire. He said that he agreed with Matt O'Neill's suggestion of having a three-year timescale with annual updates provided to the Committee.
- County Councillor Karl Arthur asked if there were any proposals to develop Barlby Business site in his division. He also commented that in his view the best way to remodel town centres was to pedestrianize them to create a café style culture. Matt O'Neill replied that in relation to supporting businesses in the district, the County Council was working closely with Selby District Council on the 'Better Together' programme. A town board had been set up to manage 'place' in each of the main settlements in the district: Sherburn-in-Elmet, Selby and Tadcaster. The idea was to be in a position to set out to government a town deal for each area. Concerning pedestrianising town centres, the Council had done a significant amount of work in various parts of the county but the

outcome needed to be as result of being business-led if such schemes were to work well. If businesses were in favour the County Council would look at delivering such schemes especially if they increased footfall and business turnover.

- County Councillor David Goode said that he liked the fact that the proposal to refresh the plan was about evolution rather than revolution. In this very troubled time, to have an element of stability in terms of planning going forward was the right approach. It would not make sense for the lifetime of the plan to go beyond three years in view of the future now being so uncertain and difficult to accurately predict. With reference to paragraphs 8.2 and 8.3, he queried why there were not key indicator updates in relation to the 2017 to 2020 plan. He said that the latest available data did not tell a good story overall. He was interested to know about what new key performance indicators would be produced to reflect the current environment that we were all now living in. Matt O'Neill replied that concerning the indicators, the economic data in terms of GVA was published retrospectively. What he had done though was to highlight the key economic matrices that were relevant to the enablers in the plan and had updated those in paragraph 8.3 of the report. More work though did need to be done in terms of making that clearer so that it was understood that some of the figures related to 2019 whilst other data sets related to 2018, and that was due to the data sets being published at various points in time and not on a regular basis. He said that he did not agree though that there was not a good success story to tell overall. The broad aims of what the County Council wanted to achieve had been accomplished such as increasing the total number of jobs including medium to higher-level wages. That was in part down to the success of the companies operating in the county. There was a good story to tell but he took on board that this needed to be articulated better in the updated plan and would amend accordingly.
- County Councillor Caroline Patmore said that she hoped that the plan would be delivered in the ordered way that Matt O'Neill had outlined. She explained about the North York Moors National Park Authority's initiative in setting up a Rural Recovery Fund to help deal with the local consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. She asked what level of contact Matt O'Neill had had with the Park Authority and any support that he could provide. Matt O'Neill confirmed that he and his team were working closely with the two National Park Authorities in North Yorkshire, in particular through the Directors of Development Group. The NYCC Corporate Director for Business and Environmental Services chaired the group. This meant that the County Council aligned with partner organisations on these economic issues. However he acknowledged that this should be made more apparent in the wording of the updated draft plan and agreed to action that.
- County Councillor Paul Haslam said that it was a forward-looking report. With reference to Enabler 1, he said that he would like to see reference made to considering the quality of housing built. This was because one of the highest sources of carbon emissions was down to the country's poor housing stock. Any new housing that was developed needed to be better quality housing stock to fit with our green credentials. In relation to Enabler 2, there was no significant provision in the related text about encouraging active travel including cycling. This aspect needed to be included, with reference made to not only about the creation of more cycle routes but also about having secure places to store bikes in town centres for more people to be encouraged to use bikes. In respect of Enabler 4, reference needed to be made to promoting healthy diet in particular to nutrition. He went on to note the impact that an unhealthy diet, as a lifestyle

issue, could have upon increasing the chances of a person suffering from Alzheimer's in later life. Whilst he supported the need to create the right conditions for business and growth, there needed to be reference to the County Council primarily welcoming low carbon industry. In respect of promoting the high street, one of the areas the County Council needed to look at was about creating a higher population density of people living in town centres. This was because it would help keep alive the livelihoods of businesses operating there. He said that in terms of pedestrianising town centres there should be a balance between what people want as well as what companies want. Businesses often simply wanted free parking, with the example of Harrogate cited, but free parking would not solve their problem. Pedestrianising streets in town centres was probably a better option. He recommended that the County Council should have a wider debate beyond that of just with companies, when considering whether an area should be pedestrianised or not. Matt O'Neill replied that wider consideration was given, including ascertaining residents' views, but as stated earlier such schemes needed to be company-led. This was because primarily the effect of pedestrianising an area was on the businesses operating in that area. County Councillor Paul Haslam replied that there was lots of evidence that pedestrianising streets worked across the world. He queried why it would be any different in North Yorkshire.

Resolved –

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That the Committee receives an annual update report on the progress of the North Yorkshire Economic Plan.

105. Ringway performance – 2019/20

Considered –

The written report of the of the NYCC Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services, advising Members of Ringway's performance under the Highways Maintenance Contract (HMC2012) during the period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020, and the outcome of the Evaluation Panel held on 20 May 2020.

Barrie Mason introduced the report. He reminded the Committee that the HMC2012 contract would end in 2021. He explained that the Evaluation Panel had decided that the contract term should remain unchanged on the basis that Ringway had passed all but one of the Primary Performance Indicators (PPIs). However the Panel had agreed two specific extensions that both linked into the County Council's work to develop NY Highways. Ringway would continue to deliver highway services for the County Council until the end of May 2021. The reason for the two months extension was in order to make sure that we would go beyond the winter service period across the transition from Ringway to NY Highways. The other agreed extension was for Ringway to continue to deliver the surface-dressing programme for the next year but this would not continue after that. The programme cost in excess of £10 million across the county. The Panel concluded that the extension of this service would reduce the risks of moving to NY Highways, avoiding the need to transfer this large piece of work during the very earliest stages of the company's operation.

Barrie Mason went on to thank staff at Ringway for their help, guidance and support to the County Council in respect of the practical arrangements for setting up NY

Highways. The key thing for the County Council was that in terms of the transfer to NY Highways, road users would see no difference in the service levels currently provided.

Barrie Mason noted that although the report covered the period up to March 2020, it was worth reflecting not only on the 2019/20 financial year in terms of performance but on also some of the key events that had occurred during that financial year and subsequently. This included the flooding events in Richmondshire in July 2019, where Ringway had played a fundamental part in our response. The County Council had also worked closely with Ringway in delivering the arrangements for the Tour de Yorkshire in May 2019 and the World Road Race Cycling Championships in September 2019. From February 2020 to March 2020, the county had been faced in short succession with the impact caused by Storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge. Ringway had been fundamental in the Council's response to the flooding. Barrie Mason went on to note the work that the County Council and Ringway had done shortly afterwards from March 2020 to respond to the pandemic. This included facilitating social distancing during the lockdown to help with the local economy and then in respect of the re-opening of the government's staged approach to releasing the lockdown.

Ringway was currently working with the County Council to ensure that there was resilience for the winter service as possible across the winter period with the covid situation and our key thing in highways had been to deliver as close as possible a business as usual service and Ringway had been fundamental to that continued to be.

John Nicholson thanked Barrie Mason for the County Council's appreciation of the service that Ringway had been providing and would continue to provide right up until the end of the contract. He said that it had been an unprecedented year for Ringway and was pleased with the way in which staff had responded. The County Council had been keen to ensure that Ringway continued to provide as far as possible a business as normal service during the pandemic and Ringway had been able to respond to that. He said that he was pleased that Ringway had managed to continue to improve its performance against the contract's performance indicators. It remained Ringway's aspiration to improve its performance yet further but had been close to passing all of the Primary Performance Indicators. Whilst Ringway had not achieved the targets set for all of the Secondary Performance Indicators, in overall terms given the backdrop, he was pleased with the level of performance delivered and hoped that Elected Members felt the same way.

Members made the following key comments:

- County Councillor David Goode noted that the failure to achieve the target relating to gully emptying had arisen over successive years. He queried why the GIS mapping system introduced in the past year had not led to an improvement in performance. He also asked if a record of local-flood related events was kept that could be directly attributed to gullies not being emptied and cleaned. He also asked if in respect of the establishment of NY Highways, was the County Council taking lessons learnt and ensuring that improvements would be made going forward. Barrie Mason responded by saying that in respect of gully emptying it was accepted that the performance needed to improve. There had been a 10% improvement in 2019/20 up to 88% when compared with 2018/19. However, it was still not where the County Council wanted to be. The Esri mapping system was increasingly being used but it had taken time for the system to bed in. Local records were kept in terms of locations where there were known hotspots. If a particular location required more gully cleaning work than usual, staff were encouraged to consider if more capital works could be done there to improve the drainage system. In relation to the work being undertaken to set up NY Highways, the first step was for

Ringway's rectification action plans to be implemented where an improvement in performance was required. This meant that the County Council was working now with Ringway to try to improve the service as opposed to waiting until NY Highways came into being. The expectation was that there would be further improvements in the meantime. Gully emptying would continue to be an area of focus. John Nicholson said that he was frustrated that the performance target for gully emptying had not been achieved this year but wished to assure Members that a lot of effort had been put in and performance in 2019/20 had been a further improvement upon performance in 2018/19. He was hopeful that the right set of conditions had been put in place for NY Highways to take forward and achieve the level of performance that the County Council would be looking for in the future.

- County Councillor Stanley Lumley said that with regards to establishing hotspots in relation to gullies, whilst the computer system would eventually gain that knowledge the local parishioners already possessed that knowledge. He went on to give an example in his division of where a parish council had submitted comprehensive information to its local Area Highways Office about blocked gullies causing flooding issues along a stretch of road. Subsequently a particular gully had blocked causing a health and safety issue to arise due to it being near to a school. Operatives had responded to that particular issue very quickly but they did not at the same time clear the blocked gullies only yards away which had caused water to back up. It would have made a great deal of sense if those gullies had been unblocked as well at the same time. To date though this had not happened.
- County Councillor Clive Pearson raised an issue related to surface dressing failures. He gave an example in his division which had been left over to the following year to be redone because of the weather conditions. He queried what would happen if this happened for another year in succession, further delaying the repair. Barrie Mason replied that if a fault in the surface dressing became evident during the initial programme of work then it was possible to put that right at the time. However, the issue with surface dressing was that a certain set of weather conditions were required so rectification of a known fault could not always be achieved in the period between the end of one programme and the start of another. It also depended upon the timing of when the fault first became known. He acknowledged though that there were improvements that might be able to be made regarding signage to make it clearer to people that there could be an issue with a particular stretch of road in the period before it was repaired. John Nicholson added that in the unlikely event that an issue could not be resolved during the current season if there was a failure of dressing which Ringway was responsible for then it would ensure that work was undertaken at the first available opportunity either by its staff or by a third party. He said that Ringway would not be running away from any failures and would carry out any remedial works as required even if it was some months after the end of the contract.

Resolved –

That the report and attached appendices be noted.

106. Review of North Yorkshire County Council's 20mph Speed Limit Policy - Report of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee Task Group

Considered –

The written report of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee Task Group setting out its findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from its review of the County Council's 20mph Speed Limit Policy.

County Councillor Stanley Lumley, in his capacity as Chair of the Task Group, introduced the report. He referred to the aims of the review. He said that the task group had carried out an in-depth and comprehensive piece of work, with the report comprising the findings from other local authorities and evidence hearings from the 20s Plenty Campaign Group, North Yorkshire Police and the 95 Alive Partnership.

The task group had concluded that the existing policy did in fact allow a degree of flexibility already. Members on the group had also been mindful that any policy changes would need to ensure that road users were able to continue to move as efficiently as possible for work and leisure purposes. The view that the group had come to though was that the policy would benefit from some updating and should be more publicly accessible. In particular, it was felt that the policy should be more explicit in considering 20mph speed limits around schools and consideration given to extending the distance traditionally considered around schools. Extending the area, would help encourage children to use active modes of transport by making the road environment visibly safer beyond the immediate vicinity of the school.

The task group had also suggested that the County Council's highways department should draw up a list of high-risk collision areas to examine whether an area would benefit from a 20mph speed limit. This would be using three years' worth of data and would need to take into account the function of the road and the road environment.

Accident statistics should continue to take precedence on informing whether an area was suitable or not for 20mph speed limits together with the function of the road. However, the policy should reference links to the wider policy agenda in relation to driver education, supporting alternative modes of transport and shaping the built environment. This was so that the wider policy focus was not exclusively constrained by historical accident statistics in determining 20mph speed limits, if an otherwise strong case could be made alongside reducing road traffic casualties, such as for 'quality of life' reasons.

County Councillor Stanley Lumley went on to note that the report had been finalised during the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard, by way of a postscript reference had been made in the report to the possible longer-term transport and environmental legacy that the crisis could have upon the use of our roads, with possibly more support for car free spaces or 20mph speed limits in some of our town centres.

He recommended the Committee to agree to the task group's report including the suggested recommendations to go to the Executive.

Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie said that he welcomed the report and looked forward to receiving it at the Executive meeting in due course. The report came at a time especially in response to the covid-19 pandemic when members of the public were becoming more conscious of the environment and having safer streets, with 20 mph speed limits coming into that mix. He acknowledged that there were mixed feelings though amongst the public about 20mph speed limits being introduced and the

report made that clear. 20mph speed limits were not the 'cure all' that some people believed they were. He went on to cite an example of a school within his division which already had a 20mph speed limit but staff were wanting further measures to be introduced to overcome what they perceived to be road traffic hazards. He heard the term 'it is an accident waiting to happen' being said often but as Executive Member he had to be guided by the history of accidents within an area. He wished to assure Members that if a history of accidents did build up outside schools, the County Council would act and could do so in various ways, including by introducing 20mph speed limits. Conversely, though the County Council had to consider that in order for 20mph speed limits to be effective highways often needed to build in engineering methods to slow traffic down. This was expensive and was unpopular with residents. He said that he particularly welcomed the suggestion though in the report about looking at all schools: those, which had 20mph speed limits already, and those that did not, and then see whether the Council should build more clarity into its policy.

Members made the following key points:

- County Councillor Karl Arthur said he agreed with 20mph speed limits around schools and suggested increasing the number of schools that this covered including secondary schools. County Councillor Stanley Lumley said that the task group had considered those points. There was scope in the existing policy to introduce 20mph speed limits beyond infant and primary schools.
- County Councillor David Goode said that as a member of the task group he had come to the view that in the main the recommendations took a balanced approach between a number of competing factors. The task group had taken evidence from different groups looking at the issue from very different perspectives. He still had some reservations around the Council's approach to speed being one of the overarching factors taken into account when considering introducing 20mph speed limits. However, he was pleased that reference was made in the report to the need for the Council to start looking at a wider set of attributes when considering 20mph speed limits, especially in relation to quality of life factors. Public attitudes were changing and he hoped that the Council policy would change to reflect that. As referenced in the report, the covid pandemic had further shown that there was a lot of support out there for improvements in terms of pedestrianising streets and increasing cycle routes. In terms of the review of particular accident hotspots, that was a key priority for the Council to consider whether 20mph speed limits would improve safety in those areas. He suggested that the highways officers involved in the review should be asked to bring a report back to the Committee in 12 months' time, setting out the progress that had been made in implementing the task group's recommendations.
- County Councillor Paul Haslam said that the report was comprehensive but had missed an area off. There were in the region of 17,000 school pupils across Harrogate and Knaresborough and over 60% of the journeys in those towns were less than two miles. Many children were prepared to cycle to school but only in the region of 4% did - the national average. The whole issue around 20mph was around making roads safer. At the moment a number of us were trying to encourage more people to cycle but there is not a higher uptake because people feel that roads with 30mph speed limits in built-up areas are unsafe. We need to be forward looking instead of retrospectively looking at accident statistics. The report needed to have a section relating to urban areas and the impact that 20mph speed limits could have upon active travel. The report refers to roads around schools but the issue was about the roads between someone's home and school. Jonathan Spencer said that perhaps it

was not clear enough in the report but the task group had recommended that the distance covered by 20mph speed limits around schools should be extended. It was felt that this would encourage more home to school journeys using active travel modes; there had been discussion about the coverage being up to a two-mile area. Clearly though there were limits beyond which 20mph speed limit areas could be extended and so could not include all pupils travelling from home to school especially those travelling beyond the catchment area.

- County Councillor Stanley Lumley said that the task group had deliberated at some length about the multiple approaches taken to this situation from having a blanket 20mph speed limit policy across all settlements in North Yorkshire down to where the task group got to eventually in coming to its conclusions and recommendations. Each of the points raised by Councillor Paul Haslam had been discussed but the task group felt that it should concentrate on those aspects that were most achievable and could have the greatest impact. Whilst it should be an ambition to increase the 20mph speed limit programme there was a need to be realistic by taking into account the county's rurality and what people would be prepared to accept. However, there was provision within the existing policy for any area to be considered for the introduction of a 20mph speed limit but it would have to be done through due process. County Councillor Paul Haslam said that whilst he understood those points, the report was retrospective looking and instead needed to be more aspirational especially in light of the new world arising from the covid pandemic. There was a need to encourage people to get out of their cars. He said that he fully accepted not having 20mph speed limits across the whole of North Yorkshire but firmly believed that in urban conurbations it needed to be considered.
- County Councillor David Goode said that he had come to this piece of work with a similar approach to County Councillor Paul Haslam. However, he had subsequently come to the view that, notwithstanding the suggested changes to be made to the policy by the task group, there was a significant degree of flexibility already in the policy to allow 20mph speed limits to be rolled out more widely. One of the concerns the task group had had was that the Council was doing little to promote the policy and so one of the recommendations was about increasing its profile amongst the public. The report highlighted that there were activities around the county such as the Park & Stride scheme, which linked in with the zoning around schools. There was a need for the policy to make links to other related policies and vice versa. This was in order to avoid a siloed approach taken towards the 20mph speed limit policy's implementation; this remained a concern of his. The whole of what the County Council was capable of doing would be greater than the sum of its parts if it linked up its range of policies.
- County Councillor John Ennis said that he welcomed the report. It was important to be able to show to local residents that we were looking at this subject in a serious and open-minded way. There was a perception sometimes that because the Police could not enforce 20mph speed limits there was nothing that could be done but this report had shown this not to be the case. He said he would welcome a couple of things as a direction of travel including looking beyond historical KSI statistics to take a broader view of assessment of risk and secondly to include secondary schools. He welcomed the opportunity to look at a wider area around those schools by broadening the distance criteria.

Resolved –

That the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee approves as submitted the report of the task group including the recommendations to be presented to the Executive.

107. Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Principal Scrutiny Officer asking the Committee to confirm, amend or add to the areas of the work listed in the Work Programme schedule (Appendix 1 to the report).

Jonathan Spencer introduced the report.

He provided an update on the work of the Committee's task group set up to look at ways to reduce single-use plastics in the County Council and more widely.

He went on to refer to the County Council Motion relating to NHS parking and the proposed amendments to the motion discussed at the County Council meeting held on 22 July 2020. Subsequent discussions had been held arising from the County Council's Chairman decision to refer the matter to the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. An informal meeting had been held on 19 August 2020 inviting the proposers of the original motion and the proposers of the amendments to the motion to attend with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issues and to establish if general agreement could be reached of the wording to inform the Committee for today's meeting. In the spirit of trying to reach a compromise the following wording was being recommended for the Committee to recommend to the County Council for adoption:

"That this council makes known to all NHS Hospital Trusts in North Yorkshire that this council supports and encourages free on-site parking for frontline NHS staff at their work place for the duration that covid-19 places a strain on the NHS. We also invite them to consider how parking policy and grants for using sustainable travel options for NHS staff can best achieve a long-term aim for carbon reduction and sustainable travel across our County."

The Chairman invited County Councillor Geoff Webber (the proposer of the original motion) to speak. County Councillor Geoff Webber thanked Jonathan Spencer for drafting the suggested wording. He said that it represented a very reasonable compromise and was happy for it to be the amended motion as it retained the essential elements of what had originally been called for. He hoped that the Committee would support the wording.

Members made the following key points:

- County Councillor David Goode said that as the seconder of County Councillor Geoff Webber's motion, it was disappointing that the first proposed amendment destroyed what was aimed at in terms of the motion put forward. It would have been feasible at the County Council's meeting to have incorporated the wording of the second proposed amendment into the motion. Both articulated different but equally valid points that were not opposed to each other. Travelling by private transport at this point in time though was probably the best option for

NHS staff and it was perfectly sensible to call for NHS staff to be able to park their cars close to their hospital free of charge. By calling for this to happen, it was something positive that the County Council could do to support and say thank you to NHS staff at a time they were risking their lives to save others, whilst also calling for less car-usage after the pandemic. He agreed that the suggested wording was the best compromise in terms of the original wording of the motion and the two subsequent amendments. He went on to state that he hoped the Committee would support the wording and recommend it to the County Council for adoption.

- County Councillor John Ennis asked for the Committee to consider adding the following words: *“and to reduce parking by NHS staff on residential roads near to their place of work”*, at the end of the suggested wording of the amended motion.
- County Councillor David Goode said that he could not support the wording suggested by County Councillor John Ennis. This was because it appeared to be completely at odds to the original motion. Clearly, an element of supporting NHS staff to park close to hospitals would involve parking on associated roads.

Jonathan Spencer went on to refer to the work programme and noted that an area of work to be incorporated related to actions arising from the work of the Climate Change Members Working Group. He said that he would liaise with colleagues to look at how the work could be allocated between the County Council’s various scrutiny committees to make this more manageable. The bulk of the work though was expected to be most relevant to the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved -

- a) That the work programme be noted.
- b) That this Committee recommends to the County Council that it approves the following wording as the agreed amendment to the NHS Parking Motion:
“That this council makes known to all NHS Hospital Trusts in North Yorkshire that this council supports and encourages free on-site parking for frontline NHS staff at their work place for the duration that covid-19 places a strain on the NHS. We also invite them to consider how parking policy and grants for using sustainable travel options for NHS staff can best achieve a long-term aim for carbon reduction and sustainable travel across our County.”

The meeting concluded at 12.30pm

JS