

# North Yorkshire Council

## Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 10th April, 2024 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor David Staveley in the Chair plus Councillors Philip Barrett, John Cattanach, Mark Crane, Melanie Davis, Caroline Goodrick, Hannah Gostlow, David Jeffels, George Jabbour (substitute), Steve Mason, Subash Sharma, Phil Trumper, Arnold Warneken, Steve Watson and Robert Windass.

In attendance (in person): Tom Gifford (National Highways - A66 Project Sponsor) and Stewart Jones (National Highways - A66 Project Director)

In attendance (virtual): Ada Gonzalez Albert (National Highways - RIS 3 Pipeline Regional Delivery Director), Mairead Lane (National Highways – RIS 3 Pipeline Programme Director), Councillor Paul Haslam (for item 9)

Officers present: Karl Battersby, Nigel Smith, Brian Stanforth (NY Highways) and Will Baines

Apologies: Councillors Paul Haslam and David Ireton.

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### Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

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#### 1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Ireton, with Councillor George Jabbour attending as substitute.

Councillor Paul Haslam also gave his apologies but was able to attend virtually to present item 9 (Annual Report of the Climate Change Member Champion).

#### 2 Minutes of the Meetings held on 18 January and 1 February 2024

##### Resolved –

That the minutes of the meetings held on 19 January 2024 and 1 February 2024, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed as a correct record.

#### 3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 4 Public Participation

No public questions or statements were received.

#### 5 Verbal Update from the Corporate Director of Environment

Karl Battersby, Corporate Director of Environment, attended the meeting to provide a verbal update on the directorate.

Some of the key points highlighted in his update are as summarised below:

- The restructure of the Environment directorate and plans for service transformation
- Progress with the three 'Transforming Cities Fund' projects
- Upcoming consultations on Traffic Regulation Orders in Skipton and Harrogate
- Kex Gill – piling works due to start shortly
  - Designs for replacement road scheme to be finalised shortly
  - Expected to be on site in April and May, with extended working hours over evenings and weekends.
  - Set to be the largest capital project for North Yorkshire Council
- Directorate climate change action plans are under development and lead officers now in post to drive forward plans.

Following the update, questions raised by the committee included:

- The impact of the recent unprecedented wet weather and its impact on the progress with major road schemes?
- The disruption to local businesses and the traffic congestion caused by the Kex Gill diversion route and the expected completion date for the reopening.
- Whether the work of the climate change team will look at future proofing against potential costs coming in the years ahead, as well as policies and procedures around rationalising the estate and decarbonisation?
- How potential transformation savings are monitored and checked within the directorate?
- If there was any impact of climate change events on the insurance cover for the authority.
- A member emphasised that new trees are required when others are chopped down.
- The continued use of spray injection patching for road repairs and whether it works better in some areas than others?
- The link up between the Environment directorate with the planning service.
- Plans for improving coastal infrastructure.
- Work on developing a long-term solution to the Oliver's Mount approach road at Jackson's Lane, particularly given the economic impact for the local area with the nationally recognised motorbike races.

**Resolved** – That the update be noted.

## **6 National Highways Update**

Considered – Report of National Highways.

Stewart Jones (A66 Project Director) and Tom Gifford (A66 Project Sponsor) from National Highways introduced the update, setting out the structure of the organisation, comprising teams in strategy, operations and major projects.

Within major projects, there are projects that can be delivered under National Highways governance (typically under £500m) by regional teams, and those costing more that fall

under Department for Transport (DfT) governance.

On the A66 Transpennine Route Scheme, the Development Consent Order was granted by the Secretary of State for Transport on 7 March 2024, and is now going through Department for Transport (DfT) governance to secure further funding to continue developing this scheme. The appeals period is ongoing, where objections can be raised. In recent months, the development has progressed, with designs initially worked up on the western side of the scheme in the first instance.

The full business case is required to be finalised and signed off by the Department for Transport to access the construction phase funding. Pending the conclusion of the appeals period and the extent of any challenges made, construction is expected to start in Spring/Summer 2025 with enabling works. An Environmental Management Plan is also being prepared.

Councillor Angus Thompson, the division member for North Richmondshire, asked about the implications of the A66 scheme on the Scotch Corner roundabout. In response, it was explained that the plans at Scotch Corner were to widen the carriageway rather than a significant intervention. The end of the involvement of Costain as one of the developers for the eastern side of the project had caused a delay in progress, but with different suppliers now in place things can move forwards, but this is at very early stages currently.

As a follow up, the congestion at the roundabout was highlighted, for example residents leaving Middleton Tyas via Scotch Corner can find it extremely difficult and that is without any additional traffic. In response it was noted that as part of the Development Consent Order there has been a lot of engagement on the scope of the scheme which sits within its remit. The scheme now has approval and detailed designs are being worked up for all aspects of the scheme, from the A1 to the M6, with a total of ten different schemes undertaken by three different contractors. Construction for the project will take a number of years, given the size and scale across the Pennines as an important strategic route, with Scotch Corner an important part of this A66 upgrade. However, it is a smaller component project in relation to some of the large bypasses required to enable the A66 dualling.

Councillor Steve Watson asked for the Scotch Corner junction improvements to be brought forward in the overall programme, believing it is pointless rushing traffic to a known congestion spot. On the scheduling of the works, it was explained that considerations on priority include safety as well as the earthwork seasons, traffic management requirements and the views of the expert contractors to allow them to work as efficiently as possible.

In response to specific points raised:

- Traffic modelling has been undertaken on the scheme in partnership with North Yorkshire Council and the predecessor authorities to support the scheme. National Highways are very much aware of the plans to construct a new Scotch Corner Designer Village close to the roundabout and the relationship between the projects, in particular the cumulative impact, has been factored into the traffic modelling undertaken so far.
- The close dialogue between National Highways and North Yorkshire Council was seen as crucial for the progress of the two schemes, to ensure that the detailed designs work from both a local transport perspective and the strategic highways viewpoint.
- Engagement with elected members was seen as an area that could be improved to be more proactive.

On the A64 dualling, National Highways officers updated the committee that it is one of over

30 RIS3 pipeline schemes across England. Stage 1 and 2 has been completed, with a deliverable solution identified and recommended to the Department for Transport. Follow up work has been undertaken to reduce the cost through a value engineering study, which looked at whether to reduce the number and simplify the layout of proposed junctions, with changes including removing grade separated junctions, adding in footbridges and on-/off-slips. Walking and cycling measures and provision for utilities were also reviewed to ensure the most efficient provision. Natural England had confirmed that areas of woodland impacted by some of the proposals meet the criteria to be classed as ancient woodland, and therefore any further work on this project would need to consider best way to avoid those. This value engineering study reduced the costs of the project assets, but the overall value for money for the scheme has remained low. National Highways are now awaiting direction from the Department of Transport on the next steps for the project. It was also noted that Government announced in March 2023 that work on the future pipeline of schemes, like A64 Hopgrove, that were earmarked for RIS3 (covering 2025 to 2030) will now be considered for construction as part of RIS4 (beyond 2030).

Councillor Caroline Goodrick felt that if there are changes made to the scheme, then the local elected members should be kept updated, to understand what the changes are and can input the local knowledge they have into the plans. Regarding the low value for money ratio, given the expected dualling of the A1237 York Outer Ring Road, it was believed this would deliver traffic in a much faster way to the Hopgrove A64 roundabout, which is already at capacity and cannot cope with the traffic as it currently is. It was felt that all of this would have a knock on impact on the social and economic viability of the local area, in particular employment opportunities given the strategic importance of the A64 route to the eastern side of the region.

In response, it was noted that stakeholder reference groups have been set up and tend to meet every six months. It was understood that local councillors were already invited to these but these will be checked to ensure updates are shared.

On the low value for money, an economic analysis was undertaken as part of the business case, as well as a strategic analysis. All monetised impacts are added up and then divided by the schemes costs to estimate the benefit / cost ratio (BCR). Furthermore, the scheme is up against 30 others for investment as part of RIS3.

Councillor Steve Mason asked about how the accident blackspot at Welburn is factored into consideration and whether dualling of the route all the way through to Malton has been considered. In response, it was noted that the pipeline study areas had come out of regional modelling and assessments, with the section to Barton-le-Willows seen as the most appropriate for the initial dualling.

Councillor David Jeffels commented that the A64 is now a bottleneck all year round. Given the time any dualling scheme would take to come to fruition, he suggested a rethink and to look at widening the carriageway wherever possible to improve the traffic flow.

Rounding up the discussion, Councillor David Staveley spoke about the frustration with the process that had to be followed and the need for much improved engagement from National Highways to work closely with council members and officers to ensure they tap into the local knowledge of the community representatives directly affected by major roads when developing schemes.

#### **Resolved -**

That the update from National Highways be noted and reports to future committee meetings be scheduled for 2024/25.

## 7 Preventing Flooding on Highways - Gully Clearance and Maintenance

Considered – Report of the Head of Highways Operations to update on the progress and performance to date of NY Highways (NYH) on gully cleaning and maintenance over the last 12 months.

Nigel Smith introduced the report, with the key points covered as highlighted below:

- Managing the removal of water from the highway network and its impact on highway deterioration is as important as ever.
- During the course of the last year, discussion has taken place regarding how to further evolve the use of the Kaarbontech system. A review of data led to an interim programme being introduced in September 2023, which took into account concerns over gullies on main roads, gullies that had not been cleaned for more than 2 years as well as local knowledge relating to known flooding issues.
- Surveys show that there are 164,171 gullies on the highway network. The risk-based programme approach adopted identifies that some 98,503 gullies need to be attended across North Yorkshire in any given year, with certain higher-risk locations requiring more than one clean in a twelve month period, taking the total number of attendances to circa 106,000 per annum. These targeted locations are constantly reviewed and updated by data that directs where those cleanses are required.
- Usually there are an average of three named storms per year, but over the last 12 months we have had ten, all of which necessitated NYH resource to be deployed, particularly in December 2023, January and February 2024 to deal with flooding issues as a direct consequence of those storms. As a result, NYH has had to respond to non-programmed gully orders in addition to the cyclic programme. It is currently estimated that in excess of 10,000 additional gullies have been attended to.
- The programme has been refined, as to what to do and where as part of the risk based, data led approach. This helps to constantly evolve the gully cleansing and maintenance programme.

Following this, key points raised by members included:

- Does the increase in the number of reactive incidents requiring gully cleansing indicate that the service isn't working well? Given the ten named storms, the highways drainage systems becomes over capacity following significant flooding events as there is simply too much water coming off not just the highway network, but adjacent land onto the highway network.
- Part of the data collection is around how much silt is in the pot, so if there is 50/75% then the gully would be put on a more frequent cleaning schedule.
- It was asked if the number of reactive call outs could be broken down into urban and rural settings, as there was feedback that local knowledge had sometimes not been fed in and taken into account. Gullies are looked at on an individual basis, with no distinction between whether it is in a rural or urban location. For example, work has been done in the Selby area to put in place solutions to work with landowners to improve the drainage and discharge of water from agricultural land.
- The robustness of the service area in dealing with land flooding adjacent to the highway was asked about. There is a wider project underway as part of our responsibilities as the Lead Local Flood Authority, together with Highways and

Planning colleagues to look into large flooding events.

- A Member spoke about a flooding event in their ward and had concerns whether we were doing enough as a Council to clean gullies regularly enough as a preventative measure and following flooding events and asked whether officers go out and look at affected gullies following events.
- It was asked whether there are trigger points where the planned gully cleaning schedule is superseded by more reactive schedules to treat gullies affected by heavy rainfall or other unforeseen weather events?
- A piece of work is ongoing regarding how much further we can pull the data and intelligence from the cyclical programme together with the local knowledge and the officer intelligence gathered from recent flood events.
- A lot of the intelligence led, local knowledge is absolutely critical. Seven local area teams know the area, but extra information from elected members and town and parish councils is greatly appreciated. Information received will assist in amending the programme to help target where further gulley cleans may be required.
- This year has been extreme, by January/February time the cyclical programme had to be put to one side to focus on the immediate response required to weather events. We cannot have teams waiting around on standby.
- A Member commended the response of an officer for a recent site visit following a flooding event in their division and for sending through drainage plans of the village, which has helped to alleviate the current problems.
- Parish and Town Councils would like to be the conduits for drainage issues to relay information on what is happening in their communities.
- On known flood risk areas, co-ordination is needed where trees and highways are in situ to deal with the situation in the round.
- It was asked whether a link exists with the water companies to exchange intelligence and plan potential joint activities on gully cleaning and continued maintenance?
- Concerns around the combined drainage systems and potential pollution issues, plus the highway flooding impact on adjacent properties and climate change.

It was agreed to share the quarterly cyclical high level programme of gulley cleaning works with members of the committee to provide information on when officers are scheduled to attend in their division, but with the caveat that this can be subject to change.

#### **Resolved –**

To note the update received and that the comments and suggestions from elected members be considered to improve the service.

## **8 Scientific Team Update - AQAP**

Considered – Presentation of the Divisional Officer – Scientific and the Head of Environmental Protection to set out the plans for a more co-ordinated approach to the monitoring of air quality as part of the new unitary council.

The key points highlighted in the report are as follows:

- An air quality steering group has been set up with representation across relevant services such as planning, highways, transport planning, public health and climate change to ensure there is a much more joined up approach to the subject across the authority.
- An annual air quality status report will be published in June, followed by the submission of the final Air Quality Action Plan for North Yorkshire to DEFRA in September, which will confirm the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) across the county.

Questions and comments raised by the committee included:

- The proposed approach was welcomed, in particular the development of baseline monitoring data to track changes in air quality levels.
- The future process for revoking the AQMAs currently in place and how quickly they could be reimposed if air quality levels deteriorate again. Furthermore, confirmation that monitoring arrangements will be retained despite the revoking of the AQMA.
- The recent UK Clean Air Night campaign to shine a light on stricter conditions imposed on wood burning stoves to reduce the amount of smoke that can be emitted.
- The legally binding target under the Environment Act 2021 to reduce concentrations of PM<sub>2.5</sub>

**Resolved –**

That the update to the committee be noted.

**9 Annual Report of the Member Champion for Climate Change**

Considered – Annual Report of the Member Champion for Climate Change.

Councillor Paul Haslam joined the meeting virtually to present his report.

Comments and questions raised by committee members included:

- It is difficult to track the environmental impact of Brierley Homes. It was asked whether an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework or full impact assessment could be done.
- To share the information from the residential weekends attended.
- It was noted that there was no reference to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work undertaken as part of the Member Champion role. This was to be added.

**Resolved –** That the Annual Report of the Member Champion for Climate Change be noted.

**10 Report of the Highway Reinstatements and Road Closure Working Group**

**Resolved –**

- i) That the action points 2-6 from the Highways Reinstatements and Road Closures Working Group be endorsed.
  - Confirm and communicate the precise definition of works to communities and

partners, ensuring first time completion and the use of temporary reinstatements only when necessary (especially in conservation areas). Look to limit any attempts to exploit the 48 hour grace period with repeat works.

- Recommend that the business case for change in resources or working patterns to allow increased inspector efficiency, up to and including additional recruitment, to improve the inspection rate in the face of anticipated continual increases from fibre.
  - Contact bus service operators in North Yorkshire, confirming their preferred procedure for informing them of short notice road closures and asking for information on their onward communication and contingency processes, ensuring that this is being done to mitigate and communicate the effect of closures.
  - Confirm a timescale for the improvement of One Network information.
  - Contact Parish Councils to inform them of the One Network tool for monitoring and communicating road closure information.
- ii) That a further update on this topic is considered in the 2024-25 civic year.

## **11 Work Programme**

Considered -

The following topics were suggested to be included on the work programme:

- Department for Transport invite
- Coastal erosion

**Resolved -**

That the work programme be noted and the suggestions be explored.

## **12 Any other items**

There were no further items.

The meeting concluded at 3.00 pm.