

North Yorkshire Council

Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 26th July, 2023 commencing at 2.00 pm.

Councillor David Staveley in the Chair plus Councillors Crane, Davis, Goodrick, Gostlow, Haslam, Ireton, Jeffels, Jordan, Mason, Trumper, Warneken, Watson, Windass and Sharma.

In attendance: Councillors Brown, Duncan (virtual), Kevin Foster (virtual), Jabbour, Lacey (virtual), Marsh.

Officers present: Will Baines, Edward Maxwell, Allan McVeigh, David Smith (virtual).

Other Attendees: 6 members of the public.

Apologies: Councillor Cattanach.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor John Cattanach.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

3 Public Participation

Andy Jefferson registered to speak regarding Item 5 – Call In of the Executive Decision – Review of 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy. The following points were raised in his statement:

- The majority of road collisions involving children took place in residential areas, not near schools as claimed in the policy. The policy also failed to adequately consider the impact on elderly residents.
- The Council's own climate targets required a large uptake in active travel, but cycling was much less popular on 30mph roads than 20mph. Implementing a default 20mph policy would make cycling easier without needing large investment to link existing cycle-friendly sections.
- The report failed to consider the long-term benefits on the health service from increased active travel, and the short-term benefits from reduced injury rates.

Allan McVeigh thanked Andy Jefferson for his question, and provided a response which included the following points:

- The report made no changes to the existing 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy.

- The policy and report were considered in accordance with the Equalities Impact Assessment which considered the impact on all road users, and where a need for supporting measures were identified, these would be installed.
- The policy's general principle was to consult with local groups and introduced tailored schemes, rather than adopting a blanket approach which would be inefficient and wasteful.

Pam Fawcett registered to speak regarding Item 5 – Call In of the Executive Decision – Review of 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy. Being unable to attend, her statement was read by Ian Conlan on her behalf. The following points were raised in her statement:

- As a resident of Bellerby for many years, Ms Fawcett noted that the volume and speed of traffic had increased substantially over time and highlighted several recent traffic incidents near her house.
- The impact on pedestrians who felt unsafe crossing the road had led to an increased sense of isolation among residents, particularly the elderly and on schoolchildren.
- Ms Fawcett wished to know why NYC did not adequately consider the safety of local residents, and what steps would be taken to address the issues.

Allan McVeigh thanked Pam Fawcett for her question, and provided a response which included the following points:

- The reasons for not reducing the speed limit to 20mph on the A6108 through Bellerby had been explained to the Parish Council and accepted.
- As an alternative to introducing a 20mph on the A6108, an alternative scheme to implement it on other roads around community spaces in the village had been agreed with the Parish Council.

Roy Heap registered to speak regarding Item 5 – Call In of the Executive Decision – Review of 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy. Being unable to attend, his statement was read by Edward Maxwell (Democratic Services Officer) on his behalf. The following points were raised in his statement:

- Mr Heap claimed that NYC was too reliant on statistical data in selecting where to implement 20mph schemes and was too reactive in waiting for serious incidents to occur before acting.

Allan McVeigh thanked Roy Heap for his question, and provided a response which included the following points:

- Reducing the severity and frequency of accidents was a priority for NYC and had been considered extensively, but additional factors such as active travel and promoting modal shift were also important.
- The current approach was being expanded to develop a whole network strategy across the county.

Barry Warrington registered to speak regarding Item 5 – Call In of the Executive Decision – Review of 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy. The following points were raised in his statement:

- Mr Warrington questioned why, since 20mph zones reduced carbon emissions,

promoted active travel, and improved road safety, the zones were not being widely rolled out.

- It was requested that the report reconsidered the evidence and was amended to reflect the urgent need for action to address climate change.

Allan McVeigh thanked Barry Warrington for his question, and provided a response which included the following points:

- The benefits of air quality were not in question and were explicitly stated in the report. Increasing active travel was also a target in the Council's Climate Strategy.
- The literature review showed that evidence to support a blanket 20mph scheme was equivocal, and showed that signed-only 20mph schemes only resulted in poor speed reductions.

Mr Warrington asked a supplementary question:

- While it was not possible to achieve all the desired results immediately, why low-cost schemes were not being rolled out quickly. Mr Warrington believed that a blanket 20mph limit would be such a low-cost option that would support the council's Climate Strategy.

Allan McVeigh responded:

- The policy would in fact allow low-cost schemes to be implemented where there was local support, which would be much quicker and cheaper than a blanket rollout across a county the size of North Yorkshre.

4 Chair's Introduction

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and explained why it had been arranged.

On 7 July 2023, Cllr Andy Brown and at least six members of the Transport, Economy, Environment, and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee submitted written notice that they wished for the 4 July 2023 decision of the Executive to be called in. This decision was to reject default area-wide 20mph zones in North Yorkshire, and that a series of planned review and a speed management strategy be implemented to deliver local traffic management schemes.

The members were required to determine whether the decision should be referred back to the Executive for review, referred to Full Council, or whether no further action should be taken. The Chair reminded members that the purpose of the meeting was not to discuss the proposed speed management strategy itself, but to review the way the decision had been taken and whether all appropriate evidence had been considered.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

5 Call in of the Executive decision - Review of 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy

Considered: A report of the Assistant Chief Executive, Legal and Democratic Services, seeking a decision on whether to refer the Executive decision of 4 July 2023 back to the Executive; to refer it to Full Council; or to take no further action.

The Chair invited Cllr Andy Brown, as signatory of the Call-In notice, to summarise their

arguments. Cllr Brown thanked members for attending the meeting, and delivered a presentation, the main points of which were:

- The signatories were concerned about the impact of excessive speed in residential areas, citing recent examples of fatalities and serious injuries in their divisions.
- It was felt that insufficient weight had been given to the evidence regarding the effectiveness of such speed management schemes (SMSs), and that widespread non-compliance had been assumed without adequate evidence.
- Examples of successful default 20mph schemes in Cornwall and Edinburgh were cited.
- Signatories felt that insufficient weight had been given to the ameliorating effect such schemes would have on pressures in local A&E departments, to the climate change benefits, and the positive health effects from improvements in air quality.
- The consultation was felt to be inadequate, with members reporting some areas which believed their views had not been considered. Examples were cited of Parish and Town Councils which had found it difficult to engage with the Highways Agency.
- Cllr Brown suggested an alternative option, where a coalition of the willing be set up to deliver schemes quickly where local support was strong, scoping and costing applications promptly rather than a lengthy pipeline approach, dealing with each application in turn.

The Chair invited Allan McVeigh to respond. The main points of the response were as follows:

- The positive benefits of SMSs were not in dispute, and the scheme approved by the Executive explicitly recognised the health, climate change and safety benefits highlighted by the signatories.
- The default application of 20mph zones was seen as potentially damaging, introducing them to communities which did not want them, or were which not suitable.
- It was emphasised that the proposed SMS would lead to more 20mph zones in the county, not fewer.
- Evidence was cited which suggested signed-only schemes, without physical measures, only resulted in a very modest speed reduction of 1-2mph.
- The consultation was highlighted, which had sought the views of all 90 members. Examples were cited of areas which had requested a 20mph zone and which had been accepted, showing that where appropriate these would be introduced.

The Chair invited the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation to respond, and the points raised are summarised below:

- The Executive had worked closely with officers to develop a robust and evidence-based approach that would be suitable for local communities across the counties.
- The alternative scheme proposed by the signatories, which sought implementation of SMSs where local support existed, was in fact close to the approach set out in the policy, working proactively with communities and responding where a clear need for 20mph schemes existed. The issues extended beyond a simple default 20mph

debate, with some communities needing individual solutions.

- It was hoped that members saw the positive benefits of the scheme as an improvement to the existing approach, and called on members to support it so it could be quickly delivered. Recent proposals from Area Constituency Committees, which had been rejected, had nevertheless been considered closely during the development of the policy.
- It was accepted that better communication was needed, to keep members informed about proposed schemes in their divisions.

The Chair invited debate and comment from the committee, which is summarised below:

- It was felt that the Executive had not given adequate weight to points raised by residents and Town and Parish Councils. Proposals by the Area Constituency Committees had been rejected without explanation, and the policy consultation had been inadequate, failing to consider opposing points of view. Some members argued that the local view should be weighted most heavily when considering applications for SMSs.
- Members highlighted the minimal impact 20mph zones would have on journey times in practice, a factor which had been cited as a reason to reject default 20mph zones.
- Instances were highlighted of strong local support for SMSs, including in Parishes where substantial precept increases had been levied to fund them.
- Concern was expressed about the length of time it would take for such schemes to be set up in practice, and the large number of communities already eager for SMSs in their areas were highlighted. Arguments regarding health, climate change and safety benefits should prompt the Council to rapidly implement schemes where there was local support.
- The policy was praised by other members as being an important step which would assure local communities that the issue was being taken seriously.
- It was argued that the Council needed to be mindful of financial limitations, which would hinder the rollout of physical measures to support 20mph zones.
- Officers responded to the claims of poor consultation by highlighting how local representations were clearly highlighted in the policy. It was accepted that communication could be handled better, with members being kept informed of progress and a more sensitive approach taken when engaging with local communities.

Resolved: That no further action be taken.

Officers responded to the decision by reiterating that NYC would proactively engage with Parish and Town Councils to explain the next steps, and that members would be consulted to help shape the policy going forward. The Chair highlighted that the policy would likely be reviewed annually by the TEEE Overview and Scrutiny Committee, so members would have opportunity to monitor its implementation.

6 Any other items

The Chair informed members that the Rail Delivery Group consultation on ticket office

closures had been extended to 1 September 2023, which would allow for additional member input to a collective NYC response. Members indicated that there was general support for an additional meeting, if required, to seek input for the consultation response before it closed.

The meeting concluded at 3.47 pm.