

North Yorkshire County Council

Informal Meeting of the Executive

25 January 2022

Transforming Cities Fund Programme Proposals

Report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval from the Chief Executive Officer under his emergency delegated decision-making powers to submit a Final Business Case to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and proceed to implementation of the Transforming Cities Fund programme following the latest round of Public Consultation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 £1.28bn (capital funding) was made available to city regions to bid for schemes to be delivered by 31 March 2023 through the Department for Transport's Transforming Cities Fund (TCF). The County Council was part of a Leeds City Region bid which was successful in securing £317m of funding.
- 2.2 The aim of TCF is to 'drive up productivity through improved connections between urban centres and suburbs' with a focus on investment 'in infrastructure to improve public and sustainable transport connectivity'. In the case of the Harrogate proposals, the TCF has provided an opportunity to deliver on the wishes of the Harrogate Congestion Study public engagement carried out by the County Council in 2019 where a record number of respondents (15,500 residents and businesses) expressed a desire to see more walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure to encourage people to leave their cars at home when making short journeys. They did not want investment in new highways such as a relief road.
- 2.3 As part of the successful Leeds City Region bid, North Yorkshire County Council is leading on delivery of a £42m programme with our partners at Craven and Selby District Councils and Harrogate Borough Council, under a funding agreement with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA). The TCF provides an opportunity for a once in a generation transformational improvement in the town centre gateways of Harrogate, Skipton and Selby which will bring benefits to the people that live, work and visit them.
- 2.4 Following on from the expiry of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, which allowed for committee meetings to be held remotely, the County Council resolved at its meeting on 5 May 2021 (before the expiry of the Regulations) to continue to hold remote live-broadcast committee meetings. These would then be informal meetings of the committee Members, with any formal decisions required being taken by the Chief Executive Officer under his standing emergency delegated decision-making powers, taking into account the views of the committee Members and all relevant information. This position was reviewed at the informal meetings of the County Council Members, and subsequently agreed by the Chief Executive Officer, under emergency delegated powers, on 21 July 2021 and 17 November 2021. The position will again be reviewed by Council at its meeting on 16 February 2022.

2.5 Should Members be in agreement with the recommendations, they will need to make the recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer for approval under his emergency delegated decision-making powers.

3.0 Progress

3.1 The projects have been developed to a preliminary design stage and, following public consultation on the preliminary designs, are currently being further developed to a final detailed design stage ready for implementation.

3.2 The projects are progressing through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's assurance process which, following completion of the detailed designs, requires the submission of a Final Business Case in order to draw down funding for the construction phase.

4.0 Public Consultation

4.1 Consultation on the feasibility designs for the schemes was undertaken between the 24 February and the 24 March 2021 and following good levels of support for the principles of the proposals, the Executive Chief Executive Officer (under his emergency delegated decision-making powers) agreed at the informal meeting of Executive Members on 25 May 2021 to proceed to development of preliminary and detailed designs with a further round of public consultation to be undertaken.

4.2 A further round of public consultation based on the preliminary designs for the schemes was undertaken between 18 October 2021 and 12 November 2021. The consultation exercise was run online using the WYCA Your Voice Portal.

4.3 A number of open public online events were carried out as part of the consultation, alongside in-person events for Harrogate and Selby and good levels of engagement were seen. The following table summarises the engagement for each scheme:

	Visits to Your Voice site	Visitors viewing detailed material	Surveys Completed
Harrogate	3,992	1,933	1,320
Skipton	756	411	125
Selby	1,092	421	101

4.4 The proposals which were consulted on are attached at Appendix A.

4.5 An overview of the responses and highlight themes from the consultation on the three projects is included in Appendix B. A copy of the full published consultation report for the Harrogate scheme is also included in Appendix B whilst the full consultation reports for Selby and Skipton are in the process of being finalised for publication very shortly. Recognising the good levels of support for all three schemes expressed during the first round of consultation, this second round has sought to seek views on the more detailed aspects of the proposals which attracted good levels of support.

5.0 Harrogate

5.1 The following represent the key elements of the Harrogate scheme:

- Reallocation of road space on Station Parade and northern end made one way southbound

- Improvements to eastern section of James Street and part time pedestrianisation
 - Public realm transformation of Station Square
 - Improved public realm to the north of Victoria Multi-storey Car Park (One Arch)
- 5.2 During the previous round of consultation, dealing with the principles of the scheme and initial feasibility design, the consultation responses indicated generally good levels of support for the proposals with over half of respondents feeling positive or very positive about proposals for north Station Parade, One Arch, Station Square and East Parade.
- 5.3 The responses overall in the second round of consultation demonstrate a general reduction in the level of support for the changes compared to the first round. When asked how they felt overall about the proposals, more respondents felt negative or very negative (55%) than positive or very positive (39%). 5% of respondents felt neutral and 1% said they didn't know.
- 5.4 Respondents who felt positive about the proposals still account for a strong level of support and they cited the potential for encouraging cycling and walking, improving air quality and improving the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of the town centre as reasons for that support.
- 5.5 On the basis of the survey responses and detailed comments received, the key concerns respondents expressed about the proposals were based around the potential for negative impacts on businesses, congestion, air quality and the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of the town centre. These are all factors that have been looked at in depth during the development of the proposals and are considered in the following sections of the report.

Economic and Business Impacts

- 5.6 A total of 69% of those that responded negatively felt that the proposals would have a negative impact on local business as it might discourage people to visit or spend longer in the town.
- 5.7 In terms of economic and business impacts, the Economic Case report at Appendix C outlines the potential economic benefits of the first large scale investment in the town centre in over 30 years and the findings from the report are summarised in paragraphs 5.8 to 5.11 below.
- 5.8 The Harrogate District's economy is facing challenges to its sustainability. The proposed scheme will contribute to increasing investment, job creation and productivity; the primary drivers of sustainable, inclusive growth. Supplemental benefits include unlocking further development and increasing land values in the area.
- 5.9 The scheme will enhance accessibility for more communities in Harrogate District (particularly in more deprived areas) to employment, education and training opportunities across the sub-region and vice versa, by tackling first and last mile connectivity issues.
- 5.10 Evidence suggests that the town centre retail sector is at risk of decline in the medium term. There is also a growing body of case study evidence which indicates that the scheme will increase footfall and economic value through:
- Enhancing the image of the area;
 - Creating a new destination;
 - Making the area more versatile so it can be used for events.

- 5.11 A study carried out by independent car parking experts suggests that the proposed reduction in parking will have minimal impact on the retail performance of James Street although it has to be recognised that the benefits of public realm improvements were not factored into this study and, therefore, the overall impact on retail footfall is expected to be positive.

Congestion, Traffic Flow and Air Quality

- 5.12 A primary concern of those that have responded negatively to the consultation relates to the potential for congestion and increased traffic flow. Many negative responses share concern that journey times will extend for car users, that emissions associated with cars will increase as a result and that traffic and congestion issues will expand geographically to impact surrounding, largely residential areas rather than being contained within the town centre.
- 5.13 Cheltenham Mount, Mount Parade, Granville Road, East Parade, Station Bridge and various other roads are referenced as potentially being negatively impacted either through the congestion or the changes to traffic flow and introduction of one-way systems.
- 5.14 Congestion within the town has been a key consideration for the development work associated with the TCF proposals. During the Harrogate Congestion Study public engagement carried out by the County Council in 2019 a record number of responses were received as 15,500 local residents and businesses took part. The clear outcome was that people wanted more walking and cycling infrastructure, greater support and use of public transport, and encouragement to leave cars at home when making short journeys. They did not want investment in new highways such as a relief road. These proposals seek to deliver on those wishes, the outcome of the Congestion Study was approved by the Executive at its meeting on 15 October 2019.
- 5.15 It is accepted that the detailed proposals could impact congestion in the short term in order to support delivery of the infrastructure which will enable and encourage more people to switch to active and sustainable forms of transport. Traffic modelling has been undertaken to help understand the possible outcomes and this is summarised in paragraphs 5.16 and 5.17 below.
- 5.16 The modelling report is based on 2018 (pre pandemic) traffic levels and accounts for new developments in the town, whilst assuming there is no benefit from people switching out of their cars (in order to create a worst case basis). It indicates that at the worst time of day (afternoon peak hour) there may be an increase in average journey time through the town centre of 53 seconds.
- 5.17 It is also indicated that traffic flow differences on streets could occur – the modelling looked at significant changes (an average change of 3 vehicles per minute or more). At the worst time of day (the afternoon peak hour) only East Parade experiences a significant increase in flow (5 vehicles per minute). The traffic modelling note can be found at Appendix D.
- 5.18 The potential for associated changes in air quality has also been investigated through air quality modelling. An assessment has considered the potential local air quality impacts associated with both the construction phase and operational phase of the scheme.
- 5.19 A qualitative assessment of construction activities has been carried out using the IAQM Construction Guidance. This identified that there is a High Risk of impact associated with dust emissions and a Medium Risk of impact associated with particulate matter emissions due to construction activities. However this can be

suitably mitigated and significantly reduced through good site practice and mitigation measures. The residual impacts of dust and particulate matter generated by construction activities on air quality, including emissions to air from construction vehicles and plant, are expected to be negligible, and the effect not significant.

- 5.20 A quantitative assessment of the potential impacts attributed to the operational phase of the scheme on sensitive human receptors was undertaken using ADMS-Roads to predict the changes in annual mean NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations that would occur due to the generation of additional vehicle trips at particular locations. The results show that the Proposed Scheme would not result in any exceedances of the annual mean pollutant objectives (NO₂, PM₁₀ or PM_{2.5}) in any of the modelled scenarios. The assessment report can be found at Appendix E.

Attractiveness, accessibility and safety

- 5.21 Whilst more respondents felt the scheme would achieve the aim of improving the look and feel of the town (52% agreed, 30% disagreed, 17% felt neutral), a theme amongst respondents feeling negatively overall about the proposals was that it would negatively affect the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of the town centre.
- 5.22 The proposals seek to sympathetically improve the town centre through use of planting and high quality materials and in developing the proposals consultation has been undertaken with local stakeholders, including the Harrogate disability forum to ensure that the final designs will enhance the area and improve accessibility– with further engagement planned within the detailed design stage. Additionally, whilst a reduction in on street parking is required to deliver the proposals (estimated at 39 spaces), the number of disabled parking spaces would be maintained, and the Station Parade taxi rank will also be retained. The proposed changes to parking are summarised in Appendix F.
- 5.23 The respondent's safety concerns related to the pedestrianisation of the eastern end of James Street and the potential for a lack of traffic to increase safety risk. Consultation has been undertaken with the Police and no significant concerns raised, the street will be subject to unobstructed CCTV coverage following implementation.

Achieving the Aims of the Proposals

- 5.24 In addition to being asked how they felt about the proposals, respondents were also asked how successful they thought the proposals would be in achieving the following seven aims:
- Making it easier and safer to walk, wheel or cycle to the station gateway area
 - Planting more trees and greenery
 - Improving the look and feel of Harrogate's Station Gateway
 - Encouraging more people to use public transport by making it easier to walk and cycle to the bus and rail stations
 - Reduce the number of trips made by car and encourage modal shift
 - Improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions by encouraging modal shift
 - Supporting local shops and businesses by increasing footfall
- 5.25 In all but one of the aims, more respondents agreed that the proposals would be very successful or fairly successful however, in the case of supporting local shops and businesses more respondents disagreed the proposals would be successful.

Conclusion

- 5.26 The response to the first round of consultation showed that there was a good level of support for the proposals however, the results from the second round of consultation show an increase in the proportion of respondents that feel negative or very negative about the proposals. It is not uncommon for support for highway proposals to fall

through multiple levels of consultation as more detail is presented and those that register support are less likely to do so again in comparison to those that feel negative about them. The main concerns expressed by those that responded negatively to the proposals for the Harrogate TCF in this latest round of consultation related to the negative impacts on businesses, congestion, air quality and the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of the town centre. Officers believe that the detailed evidence in the Appendices C to F which is summarised in the paragraphs above suggests that the proposals will have an overall positive impact on the local economy, air quality and the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of the town centre with a minimal increase in journey times and flows in the worst case traffic modelling. It is therefore considered appropriate that the proposals be taken forward through detailed design and implementation.

6.0 Selby

- 6.1 The following represent the key elements of the Selby scheme:
- Ousegate Active Travel Corridor – one way at the west end to allow creation of segregated bidirectional cycle lanes, improved footway widths and new public realm along with the closure of Denison Road canal bridge to vehicles
 - Bus Hub and Western Link – Improvement of the Bus terminal and linkages to wider town
 - Railway Station Gateway – Improvements to Station building, public realm around the railway station and linkages to the wider town
 - Creation of Eastern Station entrance
- 6.2 The consultation responses indicated good levels of support for the updated proposals. 71% of respondents felt very positive or positive compared to 15% feeling negative or very negative. 14% of respondents felt neutral or unsure.
- 6.3 The most common reasons given for feeling positive about the scheme were that it would be a better use of space and make the town more attractive; that it would make it easier and safer for all, including those with disabilities or impairments, to get around the town centre and that it would encourage more people to use the bus and rail station.
- 6.4 Those feeling negative most commonly cited reasons that it would make it more difficult and less safe for all, including those with disabilities or impairments, to get around the town centre; that it would be a worse use of public space and make the town centre less attractive and that it would not improve air quality by persuading more people to leave the car at home.
- 6.5 The divergence of views around ease of access is an interesting point and will be the focus of detailed design work. Consultation, including a site visit, has been undertaken with disability groups to help inform the proposals to date and this engagement will continue through detailed design to ensure the scheme best meets the needs of all.
- 6.6 Key changes since the first round of consultation were reconfiguration of the proposed paths through the park and the removal of the bridge to Olympia Park. Feedback received on these changes was positive and endorses the decision to implement these changes.
- Conclusion
- 6.7 Given the continued positive response to the proposals it is recommended that the proposals be taken forward for detailed design and implementation.

7.0 Skipton

- 7.1 The following represent the key elements of the Skipton scheme:
- Reconfiguration of the rail station car park to accommodate improved pedestrian access, upgrade to landscaping
 - Broughton Road corridor – upgraded footways and crossings to improve pedestrian accessibility, narrower carriageway and a 20mph speed limit to improve on carriageway conditions for cyclists
 - Railway station to bus station pedestrian improvements - Improvements to black walk, reconfiguration of the junction at Cavendish Street & One way on Carleton Street and canal bridge upgrade
 - Railway station to College campus pedestrian improvements – upgrade to canal path and new footpath to Aireville Leisure Centre
- 7.2 The consultation responses indicated good levels of support for all the scheme elements. Overall 66% of respondents felt very positive or positive about the proposals compared with 21% feeling negative or very negative. 11% of respondents felt neutral.
- 7.3 The key change since the first round of consultation was the removal of the proposed cycle lanes from Broughton Road in response to feedback received in that first round. 69% of respondents felt very positive, positive or neutral about this change and it is proposed to continue without the cycle lanes.
- 7.4 In order to inform the detailed designs respondents were also asked about both the form of the replacement Gallows Bridge and features they would like to see in the final scheme. The most favoured bridge option was a contemporary yet traditional form and the most popular items people would like to see in the final schemes were lighting, litter bins and seating.

Conclusion

- 7.5 Given the continued positive response to the proposals it is recommended that the proposals be taken forward for detailed design and implementation.

8.0 Next Steps

- 8.1 The next stage of the project is to complete the detailed designs and to submit the Final Business Cases to WYCA.
- 8.2 A delivery contractor has been engaged on an Early Contractor Involvement basis and will input into the detailed designs and plan the detailed delivery schedules.
- 8.3 It is anticipated that, subject to approval by the Chief Executive Officer under emergency delegated powers in consultation with Executive Members, the Final Business Cases will be submitted in April 2022 for Skipton, May 2022 for Harrogate and August 2022 for Selby. The timescales for delivery have always been challenging and negotiations have been undertaken with the Department for Transport (DfT) with regard to the deadline completion date of March 2023.
- 8.4 Officials from DfT have advised that delivery can continue into 2023/24 which will allow maximum efficiency in completing the designs and planning the detailed construction phases. Final programmes will be included in the Final Business Cases.

9.0 Equalities

- 9.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any adverse equalities impacts arising from the recommendations in the report and a full Equalities Impact

Assessment is attached as Appendix G which shows no adverse impacts to the protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010 and the County Councils additional agreed characteristics.

- 9.2 The intent of the schemes is to improve accessibility to and within the town centres and the design philosophy is to comply with current legislation, relevant standards and best practice and to seek to incorporate views received. The Action Plan that has been developed will be maintained and evolve through the detailed design phase and subsequent stakeholder engagement and ensures that concerns can be addressed.

10.0 Finance

- 10.1 This programme is funded from the Department for Transport's Transforming Cities Fund as part of the Leeds City Region bid with additional funding from partners, including contributions from Craven DC (£100k), Harrogate BC (£200k) and Selby DC (£1.9m). The County Council is contributing £100k to each of the three schemes which is built into the Capital Plan.
- 10.2 The successful funding bid allocated £7.8m for the Harrogate scheme, £5.8m for the Skipton scheme and £17.5m for the Selby scheme. Following design progression and the inclusion of Risk & Contingency sums the approved funding envelope of the schemes has been increased to take account of the risk of cost increases. Should the cost exceed the budget allocations, which includes the risk and contingency allowance, the County Council would need to re-evaluate the scope of the projects in conjunction with WYCA with the potential for any cost increases beyond the budget to be funded by the County Council. Approval would be sought at the appropriate time, if required, ahead of any unfunded spend being committed.
- 10.3 The revised allocations are £10.9m for Harrogate, £7.8m for Skipton and £20m for Selby. The County Council's contribution remains at £100k for each scheme.

11.0 Legal

- 11.1 Preparation of plans and carrying forward proposals and schemes is part of the County Council's function as Highway Authority and there is an expectation that local authorities will have given the guidance due consideration when applying for Government funding.
- 11.2 Further consideration of legal implications will be required as the schemes evolve. Once final designs have been prepared some of the proposals will require Traffic Regulation Orders before they can be implemented. Where a TRO is required the legal process will need to be followed which includes consultation and consideration of objections in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedures) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 11.3 Proper consideration as outlined in section 9.0 is being given to equalities issues that are pertinent to the proposals and schemes.
- 11.4 A delivery contractor, has been engaged on an Early Contractor Involvement basis and will input into the detailed designs and plan the detailed delivery schedules. The Council has used the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6088: Construction Works and Associated Services to engage the contractor to input into detailed design and to plan the delivery schedules. A mini competition process has been undertaken under the Framework, which is a compliant procurement in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Any future contracts for the delivery of these

schemes shall be undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

12.0 Climate Change

- 12.1 The Selby proposals are the subject of a full Environmental Impact Assessment planning application.
- 12.2 A key aim of the schemes is to encourage travel using sustainable modes of transport with a resulting positive impact on climate change. A Carbon assessment will be undertaken on the finalised detailed designs and presented in the Final Business Cases for each scheme.

13.0 Recommendations

- 13.1 That, subject to any comments Members may have, it be recommended to the Chief Executive Officer under his emergency delegated decision-making powers, that:
- (i) The proposals for the Transforming Cities Fund projects in Harrogate, Skipton and Selby are taken forward through detailed design and a Final Business Case is presented to WYCA for each project.
 - (ii) Approval of the detail of the Final Business Cases for submission to WYCA is delegated to the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Access.

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Background Documents: None