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North Yorkshire Council

Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 10th July, 2023 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor David Staveley in the Chair plus Councillors John Cattanach, Mark Crane, Melanie Davis, Caroline Goodrick, Hannah Gostlow, Paul Haslam, David Ireton, David Jeffels, Mike Jordan, Steve Mason, Phil Trumper, Arnold Warneken, Steve Watson (until item 7), Robert Windass and Subash Sharma.

In attendance: Councillor Derek Bastiman (for item 9) and Councillor George Jabbour.

Officers present: Barrie Mason, Nigel Smith, Jamie Crumlish (NY Highways), Louise McCaul (National Highways), Owen Wilson (Transport for the North), Dave Caulfield, Mark Haynes, Will Baines and Edward Maxwell.

Apologies: Councillor Steve Watson (from item 7)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Steve Watson advised that he had to leave part way through the meeting due to another commitment. Councillor George Jabbour would act as substitute for the remainder of the meeting.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 May 2023

Resolved -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Melanie Davis declared a personal interest in Item 7 – Transport for the North – Strategic Transport Plan, as her husband works for Network Rail.

4 Public Participation

No public questions or statements were received.

5 NY Highways Performance and Progress

Considered – Report of the Corporate Director – Environment on the annual progress and performance to date of NY Highways, the Council's company for the operational delivery of highways services.

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

- NY Highways (NYH) is currently in Years 4 to 5 of the 5 Year Plan, following initial mobilisation and implementation periods. The company is now seeking to transform and make best use of the new arrangements to make changes in a flexible and more dynamic way than under the previous contract.
- Achievements for NYH in 2022/23 included: delivering efficiency savings (revenue) of £350k last year through the continued use of Spray Injection Patching, employing 18 apprentices across the business, undertaking a staff restructure to minimise wasteful travel time between depots and assigning 'champions' for each operational service delivery area, developing a 'fast track' programme of training for new employees and achieving ISO accreditation for the company to create more tendering opportunities.
- Health and safety remains of paramount importance to NYH. The overall performance figures for 2022/23 were positive. But alongside the challenge to improve these figures, targeted campaigns have already been introduced to address the accident frequency rate, such as a Driver Support Programme.
- In the year ahead (2023/24), work is required to improve NYH operations by engaging with operational staff, along with North Yorkshire Council staff and wider partners to seek out and maximise opportunities resulting from LGR.
- The 5-year Carbon Plan, which positively contributes towards the reduction in carbon used when delivering the highways services, is well embedded. Examples of actions include making use of route optimisation software for crews, efficient works scheduling and the use of warm mix asphalt rather than hot mix in road and footway repairs.
- The Carbon Counting tool developed by NY Highways is gathering momentum and gaining recognition on a national platform.

Following this, comments and questions raised by the committee included:

- Information supplied to elected members on gully cleaning works undertaken up to the end of October 2023 has been helpful, but could the future schedule of gully cleaning works from November 2023 onwards also be sent to councillors to give them advance notice of works taking place in their division.
- The need to co-ordinate temporary roadworks and traffic lights on the road network to minimise disruption as far as possible. In response, the concerns were noted, with the specific locations raised to be looked into and the potential for a lane rental scheme to charge utility companies for the time that street and road permit works occupy the highway to be explored.
- The use of spray injection patching to deliver the right treatment at the right location was welcomed. It works as a mini surface dressing treatment to address defects and stop water ingress on a semi-permanent basis to prolong the life of the repair.
- It was asked whether the influence of the climate change initiatives that have been developed, such as the Carbon Counting tool, can be quantified to show the impact and benefits that the initiatives have had to influence other local authorities?
- It was felt that more effective scheduling and efficient delivery of works, together with the internal restructure, has helped to improve the response to defects completed on time.
- Inspections of reinstatements and the requirements for contractors to re-do work was discussed.
- More information was requested on the use of AI cameras to automate near miss recording internally, with officers also highlighting the recent developmental use of AI technology to survey work on highways as part of devising the future capital programme alongside traditional methods.
- There was frustration around road closures with diversions that are not clearly signposted and then the signs not collected after completion. It was explained that the Council monitors to check the proposed timing of a road closure is suitable,

adequate communication has been given and the diversion is right and will challenge the applicant if this is not the case. It was noted there were particular concerns with Yorkshire Water and a meeting is taking place to discuss this further.

- The pros and cons of using sat navs to navigate during traffic jams or diversions was discussed, with the road diversion signs displayed to assist tourists and people new to the area to use an alternative route.
- Consulting local members of intended highway diversion routes as part of the weekly sessions with Highways Area Offices should be already done, and would be tightened up in areas where this wasn't happening.
- There was clarification that the recruitment of apprenticeships is a rolling programme, to attract, recruit and retain to create resilience in the organisation and a talent succession programme for the future.
- If bad weather is expected, then proactive, non-programmed gully cleaning will take place to try to minimise the impact and ensure the drainage system is working as well as it can. By progressing with the KaarbonTech Gully solution, data and information is fed into the system to help determine the frequency of the programmed cleaning schedule and any particular issues at locations.
- The importance of the Local Flood Risk Management strategy and ongoing work with partners for water management and the interaction with planning as the Lead Local Flooding Authority was noted.

Resolved – That the information within the report and feedback received be noted.

6 National Highways Update on Maintenance and Improvement Activity

Considered – Report of Louise McCaul, Route Manager for Durham, Tees and North Yorkshire (Area 14) to update committee members on works completed and planned on and around National Highways (NH) network in Yorkshire and North East Region.

Some of the key points highlighted in the report and presentation are as summarised below:

- National Highways are keen to improve how they deal with customer concerns about how the Strategic Road Network functions (issues such as congestion, safety, integration with communities and public transport)
- On Major Projects, a RIS3 (Road Investment Strategy) pipeline is made up of more than 30 potential future schemes (including the A64) which are assessed against a broad range of criteria. The pipeline schemes remain uncommitted; the final decision on what schemes will progress to delivery rests with government. The Secretary of State for Transport recently confirmed that pipeline schemes will now not be considered for delivery until after 2030, to help ensure schemes are well-planned and efficient.
- A Value Engineering study on the A64 Hopgrove to Barton-le-Willows scheme is ongoing, scheduled to be completed this autumn. Work is underway to assure the updated cost estimates and the Value for money (VfM) statement for the scheme. While the above works have enabled cost savings on the scheme to be made, market conditions and inflation mean National Highways are not seeing an improvement in the scheme's VfM, making it difficult to deliver.
- On the A66 Northern Transpennine route, National Highways would like to upgrade the remaining single carriageway sections to provide a safe and reliable journey between Penrith and Scotch Corner. A Development Consent Order examination period has ended, with the Examining Authority set to make their recommendation to the Secretary of State by the end of August, and a final decision expected by the end of November.
- Intelligence led maintenance is key to showing where higher maintenance requirement is needed. Following this, inspectors go out to pick up defects, which is then allocated a priority (safety critical or non safety critical) and there are standard

times for repair. On the A64, a weekly route journey is undertaken to check for defects is undertaken, with major routes checked on a daily basis.

- Diversion routes are planned out to try and avoid impacting on rural towns and villages. Meetings are held at least annually with North Yorkshire Council to refresh these.
- Updates were given for the A1(M) – including M62 J33-34, A66 and A64.
- Cyclical maintenance is undertaken by National Highways including annual tasks such as: gully cleaning, weed spraying, soft estate maintenance, sightlines, tree maintenance, sweeping, cleaning signs and ditch maintenance.

Members questions included:

- Whether the possibility of match funding for a scheme would increase the Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR)?
- On the A66-Scotch Corner junction, will the impact of the cumulative effect of the major developments planned for that area be considered by National Highways when they are consulted as part of the planning process. Also, the backup of traffic from the A66 onto the A1(M) was raised as a serious safety concern.
- On the A64, there was frustration expressed that the ongoing delays to the RIS3 pipeline potential scheme to upgrade the Hopgrove roundabout and dual the section from Hopgrove to Barton-le-Willows. The widening of the existing road was suggested as a potential solution. Improving the Benefit-Cost Ratio of the scheme against other schemes across the country was seen as a major blockage to progress at the moment.
- Plans for a Vale of York services on the A1(M) were discussed.
- The relationship between National Highways and the Transport for the North organisation was asked about.
- How decarbonisation forms part of the day to day business cases put together by National Highways?
- The litter picking responsibilities for the trunk road network in North Yorkshire and how the new council discharges its duties, usually by working in partnership with planned maintenance by National Highways.

Resolved –

- i) That the report be noted.
- ii) That a representative from National Highways related to major strategic projects be invited to a future meeting.

Councillor Steve Watson left the meeting following consideration of this item, with Councillor George Jabbour acting as substitute for the remainder of the business on the agenda.

7 Transport for the North - Strategic Transport Plan

Considered – Report of Owen Wilson, Head of Major Roads, Transport for the North (TfN) on their Strategic Transport Plan public consultation.

Key points covered were:

- The strategic ambitions of the TfN STP: Transforming economic performance (*£118bn more Gross Value Added (GVA) by 2050*), Decarbonisation of surface transport (*Near Zero by 2045*) and Enhancing social inclusion and health (*1 million people fewer at risk of transport-related social exclusion by 2050*)
- The unique opportunities and challenges facing the North's economy, people and communities, showing how transport investment can enable regional economic growth, support decarbonisation and reduce social exclusion.
- Changes that TfN feel are **Page 4** include: an increase in total investment

infrastructure, a holistic 'whole journey' approach, clarity and flexibility of funding and the need to work jointly together.

- Investment in new road capacity should be targeted only where the evidence shows it is essential. TfN are providing the evidence to help the transition to low and zero emission vehicles, including with the energy sector.
- There needs to be more focus on supporting road and rail freight.
- It is pleasing to see the A59 Kex Gill scheme moving forwards and TfN continue to promote the A64 and A66 scheme with National Highways.
- Better rail connectivity is desperately needed in the North, along with common standards such as improved accessibility to stations.
- A whole systems approach is needed to enable more choice, manage demand on the road network and deliver modal shift. A transformational upgrade to the rail network is needed and continued investment in roads, but in the context of the climate emergency.
- The focus is on increased choices to deliver economic growth, which will in turn lead to more trips on the road network.
- The TfN role is to act as a centre of excellence to bring people together, with evidence and enabling information, to demonstrate the need for service integration across all transport types.

Following this, questions raised by the committee included:

- The possibility of developing the rail network in the West of North Yorkshire, for example developing the existing Clitheroe to Hellifield route as opposed to the SELRAP Skipton to Colne project.
- The need for transport investment in coastal communities is desperately needed, along with improved connectivity along with joined up thinking.
- The need to prioritise East-West connectivity from Liverpool to Hull and the Yorkshire coast and focus on upgrading the existing road and rail infrastructure already in place.
- It was asked whether Local Development Plans are considered by Transport for the North as part of formulating policy and plans. It was confirmed they were.
- The importance of having shovel ready transport infrastructure schemes if additional funding is released as a result of devolution powers was emphasised.
- A Member suggested a direct train connection between Manchester/Leeds and Scarborough to coincide with morning and evening rush hour.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted and members encouraged to feed in views to the Transport for the North - Strategic Transport Plan public consultation.

8 North Yorkshire Economic Growth Strategy

Considered – Report of the Assistant Director: Economic Development, Regeneration, Tourism & Skills providing a progress update on the development of the North Yorkshire Economic Growth Strategy and seeking views on the first draft of the Strategy.

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

- The importance of the North Yorkshire Economic Growth Strategy taking an holistic approach, to link in with transport delivery, housing delivery and investment was emphasised.
- The formulation of the strategy had been a joint effort between staff from the eight predecessor local authorities and the Y&NYLEP, to be as strategic as possible.
- A recent presentation at a Members Seminar led to a range of comments, with a mix of support and concerns. It is crucial to outline a set of ambitions to ensure there is a focus on winning future investment.

- There was a real desire to see skills development at all levels and support for key foundational economy sectors.
- Collaboration will be essential, especially with big businesses to deliver the strategy.
- There needs to be protection of what makes our places in North Yorkshire special.
- Internal consultation with officers has highlighted the need to be ambitious, to focus on good growth, ensuring prioritisation and investment decision making, the role of culture and heritage, the opportunities from natural capital and linkages to neighbouring areas.

Following this, questions and comments raised by the committee included:

- A request to strengthen the offshore wind reference in the next draft of the strategy.
- The prevalence of a cashless society since the Covid-19 pandemic and the difficulties this causes for different sectors of the economy.
- The lack of quantitative data in the strategy document and the need to establish baseline figures to make it outward facing and backed up with evidence.
- The need for significant economic investment in North Yorkshire and emphasising this within the strategy through prioritisation and a clear evidence base.
- The staff shortages in sectors such as tourism and hospitality are not helping businesses to achieve their potential and the strategy should set out a high level response to this. In particular, an aging workforce and access to skills training is holding the sector back and it has a knock on effect on improving town centres and the local economy.
- How the collaborative delivery work across Council services and strategic partnerships will be co-ordinated and monitored?
- The need to be holistic in delivering the Economic Growth strategy was vital, to link up with other departments to drive delivery.

Resolved – That the comments and feedback on the first draft of the North Yorkshire Economic Growth Strategy be noted and fed into the second draft.

9 Briefing Notes progress update

Considered – A verbal update from the Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer on the status of briefing notes to the committee.

Resolved – That the verbal update be noted.

10 Work Programme

Considered -

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

Resolved -

That the work programme be noted.

11 Any other items

It was noted that a call-in of the decision of the Executive regarding the 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy Update had been received, with an additional meeting of the committee to be convened to arrange for the call-in to be heard.