

## North Yorkshire Council

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

18 January 2024

#### Question referred from Harrogate & Knaresborough ACC (2)

##### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To detail the referral of a public statement from the Harrogate & Knaresborough ACC on 23 November 2023 for the matter to be considered.

##### 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee on 23 November 2023, it was resolved that a public statement be referred to the next meeting of the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This provision is outlined in Council Procedure Rules section 9.10 (page 210) of the North Yorkshire Council Constitution.
- 2.2 The public statement submitted by Gia Margolis from Harrogate District Cycle Action Group was:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am here to ask you to scrutinize the council's lack of delivery of Active Travel schemes.

Consultants over many years have written reports which have all come to the same conclusion. Most short journeys are less than 1.6 miles and too many are made by car. We have yet to see any implementation of recommendations to increase use of public transport, to walk and cycle.

The proposed Active Travel team is not due to start until at least next year and will have no budget. Officers tell us that no schemes can be delivered without getting funding bids. Yet despite receiving millions of pounds of funding no schemes of any value have been delivered. Schemes have repeatedly been abandoned, consultations completed, reports written but not made public. NYC's Active Travel England rating is only 1 and unlikely to get raised any time soon.

We are asking you to stop talking, give us false hope that things will change, and look at why the council has failed to deliver any significant active travel scheme over the last nine years.

Planners and Highways between them failed several years ago in allowing a local plan and developers to build large housing estates on the edges of Harrogate with no safe cycle or walking routes or frequent bus services in to the town centre and most of the estates served by rural country lanes which have become rat runs. The local parish councils, HAPARA and ourselves have all tried to work with officers and councillors to come up with solutions. The latest round of solutions for the "Western Arc" proposed by the developers together with officers have come up with a raft of junction improvements to get traffic through. Any cycling or walking elements are entirely within the developments themselves.

We believe that as councillors and officers our town has lost what were great opportunities to make changes to the way we get around. The council introduced a great scheme on Beech Grove which worked for 18 months but was withdrawn. Every other scheme has been abandoned and you will be told the same things, that schemes are being worked on and conversations held with Active travel England.

No doubt you will be told the next set of delays will be because next year the appointment of a Mayor and changes to more direct funding will be the solution. And so it goes on.

Until there is a change of policy and officers are given the directive to design and deliver effective sustainable transport schemes we will not see any delivery in our lifetime.

Harrogate could by now have had a first class cycle and walking network which would make such a difference to all our lives but we are bound by the focus on people in their cars and to keep them moving.

We have failed our children and grandchildren in not considering their future.

Councillors, please learn more about the failure of delivery of any meaningful scheme for safe cycle infrastructure, the failure to spend funding bids and to fall back time and again on allocating more space at junctions to cars. Investigate what is going on and stop accepting a litany of excuses why not.

### 2.3 The officer response to the public statement at the meeting was as follows:

North Yorkshire Council Highways Officers would like to thank the Harrogate District Cycle Action group for their submitted statement regarding their concerns with Active travel scheme progress in Harrogate. The groups disappointment in Active Travel project delivery has been noted and previously acknowledged via emails and detailed meetings with Senior managers.

The West of Harrogate Promoters have given consideration towards active travel as part of the West of Harrogate Parameters plan with a proposed bus route extension to service the new housing sites together with funding for the “pump-priming” of the service. In addition, walking and cycling schemes have been put forward which include Otley Road Phase 3 (Windmill Farm Housing Site to Harlow Moor Road) plus an active travel scheme encompassing Whinney Lane and Pannal Ash Road.

Planning applications will include a ‘Cumulative Transport Assessment’ which will have appendices to the indicative layouts for all proposed off-site highway schemes and active travel proposals, allowing those with an interest to offer their comments through the planning process.

North Yorkshire Council are committed to delivering successful active travel projects and the highways team will continue to submit bids that they are eligible for, to enable active travel across the county. The team have had a successful year engaging positively with local user groups such as HAPARA, the Road Safety Campaign group and local school communities. Such positive partnerships will prove to support successful delivery going forward.

It should also be recognised that at the request of members from a previous Area constituency committee meeting quarterly update reports regarding Active Travel progress will be submitted to the Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC.

**3.0 Recommendation**

3.1 The Committee is asked to consider the matter and agree any next steps.