

# NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

21 FEBRUARY 2024

## Report of the Audit Committee and the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee concerning a Notice of Motion on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals following a referral at the meeting of Full Council on 15 November 2023

### Report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Full Council with a summary of the deliberations and recommendations of the Audit Committee and the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee concerning a Notice of Motion on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that was referred to both committees at the meeting of Full Council on 15 November 2023.

#### 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At Full Council on 15 November 2023, the Chairman decided that a Notice of Motion regarding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) should be passed to both the Audit Committee and the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the intention of it being considered at its next meeting and recommendations brought back to the 21 February 2024 meeting of the Council.
- 2.2 The Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Steve Mason and seconded by Councillor Peter Lacey stated:

“This Council notes with concern the recent Special Report from the United Nations Secretary General – **“Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet”**– published in July 2023 to mark the midpoint between 2015 and the delivery date of 2030.

The Secretary General finds that “... *many of the Goals are moderately to severely off track and puts forward five major recommendations to rescue the Goals and accelerate implementation between now and 2030.*”

This Council notes the third of those recommendations, calling upon Governments to “... strengthen national and subnational capacity, accountability and public institutions to deliver accelerated progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.” Furthermore, this council recognises the main reasons of the Local Government Association as to why councils should investigate and implement the UNSDGs:

- Making progress towards these comprehensive and universal global goals by 2030 will depend on action at the local level, and councils are key actors at that level.
- The SDGs can help focus efforts on the health and wellbeing of people that are the furthest behind.

- Engagement with the SDGs supports and complements the declaration of a climate emergency.
- The SDGs can provide councils with a framework for strategic planning, policy review and action for sustainable development – for economic progress, social justice and inclusion, protection of the climate, environment and biodiversity, and ensuring no one is left behind.
- The SDGs can help councils to foster strategic partnerships, framing joint actions and shared priorities in terms of the goals.
- The resource burden for initial engagement with the SDGs is low.

To that end, North Yorkshire Council resolves to adopt the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) as a framework for informing our local authority's policies, work programs, functions, and initiatives. By doing so, we commit to aligning our strategies with the national and global agenda for sustainable development and working towards achieving these goals within our sphere of influence; thus recognising the significance of the UN SDGs as a comprehensive framework for sustainable development at the global level. We shall seek to apply the UN SDGs at the local level for the wellbeing of our residents.

The Council believes that:

1. Adopting the UN SDGs will provide a clear direction for our local authority's policies, work programs, and initiatives, ensuring their alignment with the national and global agenda for sustainable development.
2. Emphasising the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships will help in implementing the UN SDGs effectively.
3. Committing to regular monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of our progress towards achieving the UN SDGs is vital to engage our community in the process.
4. Encouraging cooperation and knowledge-sharing with other local authorities across the UK and world that have already adopted the UN SDGs, will help in promoting collective action and learning both locally and globally.

The Council therefore agrees to:

- A. Adopt the UN SDGs as a framework for informing our local authority's policies, work programs, and initiatives.
- B. Contribute to the achievement of the UN SDGs through the council strategies and developing plans.
- C. Actively engage and collaborates with other local authorities, organisations, and community groups to share best practices, experiences, and lessons learned in advancing the UN SDGs.
- D. Receive an annual report setting out the Council's contributions to the global agenda for sustainable development.

By taking this step, we can also demonstrate our commitment to act at a local level whilst contributing to the global effort to achieve a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient world for future generations.”

### **3.0 AUDIT COMMITTEE ON 11 DECEMBER 2023**

3.1 The Audit Committee debated the Notice of Motion with several views and responses being put forward for consideration. After a lengthy debate, the following recommendations were moved by Councillor George Jabbour, seconded by Councillor Neil Swannick and agreed by the Committee as its response to the Council motion:

- (1) The Committee notes that the Council is already working towards delivering some of the objectives that the UN SDGs outline; and
- (2) The Committee recommends that the Executive review this motion with view to ensuring that its quarterly monitoring reports incorporate the Council's progress with respect to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

### **4.0 TRANSPORT, ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 18 JANUARY 2024**

4.1 The motion text was presented as part of an officer report, providing an overview of the current work of North Yorkshire Council in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The detailed officer report can be accessed via the following link – [UN SDGs Motion \(northyorks.gov.uk\)](https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/UNSDGsMotion)

4.2 The committee were joined by Michael Leah, Assistant Director – Environmental Services and Simon Moss, Strategy and Performance Team Leader to answer technical questions on the UN SDGs.

4.3 As the proposer of the Notice of Motion, Councillor Steve Mason set out the rationale and context behind it, the key points of which were:

- The motion was submitted to try and bring the UN SDGs into the strategies of the Council.
- It is about changing our collaboration with partners, finding potential black spots in the Council Plan in relation to the UN SDGs and identify where we can do better.
- Achieving better social value, for example through the allocation of Member Locality Grants and the potential multiplier effect of funding allocations.
- The LGA recommends that undertaking a mapping exercise will lead the council into making choices about which SDGs and targets align most to its own locality and communities, rather than having to adopt them all.
- He felt the Council could publish a report together with the Council Plan to show the external wider public the progress made against the SDGs as a local authority and by doing this it would help to encourage other organisations such as NGOs, businesses and community groups to get involved and engage with us.
- He noted the recommendations of the Audit Committee and felt they could be echoed as part of any recommendations from the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise O&S Committee.

4.4 Simon Moss from the Strategy and Performance team detailed the work undertaken to map the North Yorkshire Council Plan Objectives against the UN SDGs (Appendix B) and subsequent work to look at other strategies and services provided by the Council that contribute to the UN SDGs (Appendix C). This showed that all of the 17 goals are covered by at least two of the NYC Council Plan objectives.

4.5 Of the underlying 167 targets, although some are applicable to the function of the council e.g. reducing waste generation and integrating climate change measures into policies and

plans; many are not, for example reducing the illicit arms trade or combatting desertification. It should also be noted that a lot of the underlying targets are aimed at encouraging developing countries that are furthest behind to improve in particular areas, such as infant mortality, so a selective approach is required into which of the targets that we as North Yorkshire Council want to focus on and collaborate with others.

- 4.6 On the reporting, given the close relationship between the Council Plan and the SDGs, it was felt the right approach was to use and reference the SDGs into the next Council Plan, rather than creating a separate piece of work. It was noted that the SDGs are a useful tool to aid our current framework and thinking.
- 4.7 Following this and some general comments made by members, The committee debated the motion, agreeing to the following recommendations to be considered by Council:
1. The Committee notes that the Council is already working towards delivering some of the objectives that the UN SDGs outline; and;
  2. Ask that the Executive Member for Managing our Environment informs Council Leadership Teams to make them aware of the importance of and the commitment to the UN SDGs, and;
  3. The Council use and reference the UN SDGs in the ongoing development and communication of the Council Plan.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no significant financial issues associated with the motion text proposed. The Local Government Association listed one of the benefits of engaging with the UN SDGs as the resource burden for initial engagement being low.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no significant legal implications associated with the motion text proposed.

## **7.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The climate change implications arising from the Notice of Motion are addressed in the report considered by the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny committee. (Link: [UN SDGs Motion \(northyorks.gov.uk\)](https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/UN-SDGs-Motion))

## **8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The equalities implications arising from the Notice of Motion are addressed in the report considered by the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny committee. (Link: [UN SDGs Motion \(northyorks.gov.uk\)](https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/UN-SDGs-Motion))

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That Full Council considers the recommendations of the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee agreed on the Notice of Motion on UN SDGs.

### **Audit Committee – 11 December 2023**

- (1) The Committee notes that the Council is already working towards delivering some of the objectives that the UN SDGs outline; and
- (2) The Committee recommends that the Executive review this motion with view to ensuring that its quarterly monitoring reports incorporate the Council's progress with respect to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 January 2024**

- (1) The Committee notes that the Council is already working towards delivering some of the objectives that the UN SDGs outline; and;
- (2) Ask that the Executive Member for Managing our Environment informs Council Leadership Teams to make them aware of the importance of and the commitment to the UN SDGs, and;
- (3) The Council use and reference the UN SDGs in the ongoing development and communication of the Council Plan.

Barry Khan  
Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services  
County Hall  
Northallerton  
13 February 2024

Report authors: Will Baines and Paul Preston, Democratic Services.

#### **Background documents:**

Constitution of North Yorkshire Council -

<https://edemocracy.northyorks.gov.uk/documents/s19609/NYCCConstitutionVersion2May2023.pdf>

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.